THE MAJOR BIBLICAL PROPHETS IN TALMUDIC AND MIDRASHIC LITERATURE

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UMI

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

PREFACE. v

I. RABBINIC LIMITATIONS ON PROPHECY 1

The End of Prophecy. 1
Remnants of Prophecy in Rabbinic Times . 5
Democratizing Prophecy 11
Gentile Prophecy 13
Prophecy and Law 17
Prophets as Defenders and Comforters of Israel. 23

II. ELIJAH: PROPHET OF REDEMPTION 53

Elijah and Moses 54
The Immortality of Elijah. 58
Elijah and the Resurrection of the Dead. 62
Elijah and the Messianic Age 66
Elijah's Relations to Man. 69
  Elijah as Reconciler 70
  Elijah and the Gentile Government. . . 72
  Elijah as Guardian of the Poor 75
  Elijah as Teacher. 77
    Moral Wisdom 77
    Practical Wisdom 79
    Revealer of Secrets. 80
  Elijah and Rabbi Joshua ben Levi . . . 83
  Elijah as Chastiser. 86

III. ISAIAH: PROPHET OF COMFORT. 118

The Royal Prophet. 118
Isaiah's Inauguration. 120
Isaiah as Comforter. 122
Counters Arguments of Gentiles 126
Isaiah's Special Favor 127
Isaiah as Chastiser of Israel. 129
Isaiah's Relations with Ahaz and Hezekiah 131
Isaiah's Martyrdom 136
The Significance of the Accounts of Isaiah's Death. 140
Isaiah the Martyr. 143

UMI

CHAPTER PAGE

IV. EZEKIEL: PROPHET OF REBIRTH 169

Ezekiel's Canonization 169
Rabbinic Treatment of the Discrepancies Between Ezekiel and the Torah. 171
Ezekiel's Merkabah Vision: Limitations on Study 173
Rabbinic Comments Denigrating the Merkabah Vision. 177
Ezekiel's Merkabah Vision: Lessons of Comfort for Israel. 182
Ezekiel: Defender and Consoler. . . . 186
Ezekiel's Genealogy. 190
Ezekiel and the Resurrection 191
Resurrection: Message of Hope 193
Ezekiel and Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 194
Nebuchadnezzar and the Resurrection of the Dead. 199

V. JEREMIAH AND THE PROPHETIC AGONY 234

Jeremiah as Chastiser. 234
  Jeremiah's Name. 235
  Jeremiah's Genealogy 236
  Superscription to the Book 237
Jeremiah's Reluctance. 239
Jeremiah's Agony: The Prophetic Dilemma. 241
Jeremiah Rejected by His Generation. . 244
Jeremiah and Josiah. 250
Jeremiah and Hananiah. 251
Jeremiah and the Destruction 258
Jeremiah and the Temple Vessels. . . . 267

CONCLUSIONS. 301

ABBREVIATIONS. 306

BIBLIOGRAPHY 307

UMI

PREFACE

The purpose of this dissertation is to present a systematic study of the major Biblical prophets as they appear in Talmudic and Midrashic literature. Because of the abundance of material, this study includes only the most significant of the "latter prophets"--Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel--and Elijah, one of the "former prophets" who assumed a special significance in Rabbinic thought. Each prophet is discussed in a separate chapter, in which the underlying themes that emerge from Rabbinic comments on that prophet, his life and message, are analyzed. From this study will emerge some of the basic elements for an understanding of the Rabbinic view of the prophetic function as well as the Rabbinic portrayal of several prophetic personalities.

Almost all of the material dealt with in this study is Aggadic, i.e. legendary, much of it homiletical with a didactic or edificatory purpose. Rather than the strict logic and rigid hermeneutic rules of exegesis that mark Rabbinic legal discussions, it is the heart and the imagination which speaks in the *Aggadah*. The pioneering master of Jewish historical studies in modern times, Leopold Zunz, has characterized the *Aggadah* as

> ...intended to bring heaven down to the congregation, and also to lift man up to heaven... [it] appears in this office both as the glorification of God and as the comfort of Israel.

> Hence, religious truth, moral maxims, discussions concerning divine retribution... scenes and legends from Jewish history, comparisons between the divine and Jewish institutions, praises of the Holy Land, encouraging stories and comforting reflections of all kinds form the most important subjects of these discussions. (Quoted in Israel Frankel, _Peshat in Talmudic and Midrashic Literature_, p. 49).

One of the unresolved controversies surrounding Rabbinic exegesis of the Bible is whether a particular text gave birth to its interpretation or the exegete imposed his interpretation onto the text. In short, was the Bible treated as a text to be expounded or as a pretext offering an opportunity to spell out other views. Certainly the Rabbis felt that they were uncovering that which was implicit in the Biblical text. However, it is quite clear that some Rabbinic exegesis, especially in the area of _Aggadah_, was not so much an effort to faithfully derive the meaning of a Biblical text as a means of interpreting the events of their own day in the comforting light of Biblical precedent and promise. Without doubt, many Rabbinic comments on the personalities, careers, and teachings of the prophets reflect this type of esogesis. This study, therefore, will shed much more light on the Rabbis and their times than it will on the prophets and their times.

Talmudic and Midrashic literature is, of course, vast both in quantity as well as in the time span that it encompasses. The following sources of that literature

UMI

have been used in this study: the Babylonian Talmud (redacted at the end of the fifth century); the Palestinian Talmud (fourth century); the Tannaitic Midrashim--Mekilta (fourth century), Siphra (fourth century), and Siphre (fourth century); Midrash Rabba (on the Pentateuch and the Five Scrolls, ranging in dates of redaction from the fifth century to the twelfth century, mostly from the fifth century to the ninth century); Pesikta Rabbati (fifth century); Pesikta De Rab Kahanna (fifth century); Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer (eighth or ninth century); Tanhuma (ninth century); Seder Eliahu Rabba and Zuta (sometime before the ninth century); and Midrash Psalms (tenth century).

While the dates of redaction of many of these Midrashim are comparatively late, almost all of them are based on earlier Tannaitic and Amoraic materials. In all cases, critical editions of these works were consulted when available.

In addition to these works, Louis Ginzberg's collection of Rabbinic legendary material in his Legends of the Jews has proved very useful. However, encyclopedic as this work is, it is not all-inclusive and it lacks a systematic analysis of the material presented on our subject.

Translations of verses from the Pentateuch are based on the new Jewish Publication Society Translation of the Torah (1962); selections from the rest of the Bible are based on the older Jewish Publication Society Translation of the Holy Scriptures (1916). New Testament references are from the Revised Standard Version. In some cases slight modifications have been made in these translations in order to modernize the language and make clearer the Rabbinic interpretation of the verse. Many of the Rabbinic works cited above have been translated. Here too, while utilizing these translations, I have introduced occasional modifications. Some Rabbinic sources such as the Palestinian Talmud, Siphre, Tanhuma, and Seder Eliahu Rabba have not been translated. Translations of quotations from these sources are my own.

In concluding these preliminaries, I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Moses Aberbach of the Baltimore Hebrew College who has graciously and painstakingly guided this thesis from its inception. In his kindness, generosity, and vast store of knowledge, he personifies the finest qualities of a teacher. I would also like to thank the Reverend C. Stephen Mann, Dean of the Ecumenical Institute of St. Marys Seminary and University, for the kindness and consideration which he has shown to me. Dr. Leivy Smolar, President of the Baltimore Hebrew College, has been a source of encouragement and support to me both before and during the preparation of this study. Mrs. Betty K. Sachs and the staff of the Baltimore Hebrew College library have labored valiantly to aid me in procuring many of the materials necessary for the preparation of this thesis. Finally, in line with the Rabbinic adage that that which is mentioned last is the most precious, to my wife and children whose constant patience, encouragement, understanding, and love are my greatest joy and strength, I am most grateful of all.

UMI

CHAPTER ONE

RABBINIC LIMITATIONS ON PROPHECY

Rabbinic sources reflect a decided tendency to downgrade the significance of prophecy. This tendency, the result of a complex of factors, manifests itself in a variety of ways--all tending to limit in some measure the religious authority and activity of the prophet.

THE END OF PROPHECY

According to the Rabbis, prophecy was a thing of the past. God no longer communicated with his people through the medium of a specially designated individual who would transmit His message to the people. Rabbinic sources attribute this major change in God's method of communicating with His people to Israel's sin. Thus, prophecy was not present during the Second Commonwealth period because not all of the Jews of the Babylonian exile joined in the return to Judea.[1] According to the Talmud, the holy spirit would have rested upon Hillel and Samuel the Younger, had it not been for the unworthiness of their generations.[2]

Rabbinic sources contain three views on the time when prophecy ended. The historical chronicle, Seder Olam Rabba (attributed to the Tanna R. Jose b. Halafta) states that prophecy ended with the emergence of Alexander the Great: "He was Alexander of Macedon who reigned for twelve years. Until now the prophets prophesied through the holy spirit; from now on incline your ear and heed the words of the Sages."[3] E. Urbach explains that this tradition reflects the desire on the part of the Jewish religious authorities to put a clamp on pneumatic phenomena within Judaism in the face of the major changes in the Mediterranean world that were taking place during and after the time of Alexander.[4] A second Rabbinic tradition pushes back the date of prophecy's end to a century and a half before Alexander; prophecy ended with the death of Malachi. This tradition dates the end of prophecy at the beginning of the Second Commonwealth period, a time when a new type of religious leader was to emerge.[5] Closely akin to this is the third Rabbinic opinion on the end of prophecy, the one which identifies Jeremiah as the last of the prophets. According to this view, the prophecies of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi already had been adumbrated by Jeremiah.[6] Prophecy ended with the destruction of the First Temple. It came to an end neither because of the need to be on guard against new intellectual and social currents nor out of the desire to consolidate the authority of a new type of religious leadership among the Jews. It ended with the destruction of the First Temple because that occurrence marked the ultimate failure of prophecy. A prime function of the prophet was to urge Israel to repentance, to reconcile Israel with its Father in heaven and thereby avert punishment for the people's sins. The prophets failed; the catastrophe fell. The Mekilta contains a legendary complaint of Baruch, the faithful disciple of Jeremiah . Baruch wanted to know why he had been deprived of the gift of prophecy whereas Joshua, the faithful disciple of Moses, and Elisha, the faithful disciple of Elijah, had been granted prophetic power. God's answer to Baruch was: "There is no vineyard, what need is there of a fence? There is no flock, what need is there of a shepherd?"[7] Through punishment Israel would learn what she had refused to learn from the prophets.[8] From the pain of exile, a sombered and chastened Israel would return. There was no longer any need for the prophetic call to repentance. The return of prophecy was relegated to the messianic future.[9] In the meantime, a new religious leadership would emerge which would see its function as the development of a life-style that would be infused in its every detail with the words of the Torah.

While the Rabbinic sources discussed above speak of the end of prophecy, other Jewish sources tell of the continuation of prophecy throughout the Second Commonwealth period. Josephus mentions the activity of prophets up to the destruction of the Second Temple, and designates John Hyracanus as one who had prophetic powers.[10] However, Josephus distinguishes between the older prophets and their successors. The latter are not to be considered of equal weight with the former because since the time of Artaxerxes "there has not been an exact succession of prophets."[11] It seems that while "official" prophecy had ended and the words of the official prophets had been canonized, a "free" or "unofficial" prophetic tradition continued. However, this unofficial prophecy was never to attain the sanctity of the older classical prophecy.

This prophetic activity was evident not only among Jews; it was even more pronounced among the early Christians. Jesus was acknowledged as a prophet by his followers, and on occasion he referred to himself as one. After his death, the prophetic tradition continued through the apostolic age. M.H. Shepherd Jr. writes:

> From its inception, prophesying was a characteristic mark of primitive Christianity--interpreted as in Acts 2:14ff as an evident fulfillment of the promises of the OT that it would revive in the last days. The gift of prophecy was not, however, a possession of all Christians, but a peculiar spiritual endowment ("charism") of a select number, whether of men or of women.[12]

Indeed some of the Church Fathers explained the continuation of prophecy among the early Christians as a special mark of divine favor towards the new faith. In his dialogue with Trypho, Justin Martyr claimed that the gift of prophecy had been removed from the Jews and transferred to the "new" Israel.[13] Origen saw in this a punishment of the Jews for their rejection of Jesus.[14] E. Urbach maintains that the Rabbinic view that prophecy had departed from Israel long before the time of Jesus was largely a counter to this Christian argument. If prophecy had already come to an end in the past, then neither Jesus nor any of his followers could have been prophets.[15] The messianic future would see a restoration of prophecy, but until that time those who claimed to be endowed with prophecy were either "fools or infants."[16]

REMNANTS OF PROPHECY IN RABBINIC TIMES

Although, as we have seen, the prophetic tradition continued in Judaism and Christianity, its "unofficial" character in Judaism distinguished it markedly from its classical antecedent. Unofficial prophecy manifested itself most clearly in two phenomena: the holy spirit and the heavenly voice. The term "holy spirit" (_ruah ha-kodesh_) is often used as a synonym for prophecy in Rabbinic literature.[17] J. Abelson has defined three ways in which the term is used as an adjunct to prophecy:

> Firstly, it is a divine emanation which inspired the recognised prophets of the O.T. and the writers of all the books included in the O.T. canon. Secondly, it inspired with a sort of prophetic sense several miscellaneous characters not only in O.T. Scripture but after the close of the canon. Thirdly, it is a Divine endowment akin to prophecy which anyone may attain provided he lives the life which leads up to this high state of moral, religious, and intellectual perfection. It is not merely a thing of the past. God's revelation of Himself

> is not confined to any particular period of human history. The worthy man in any age can reach the highest stage of communion with God. For this highest stage of communion is rendered possible, because God's Holy Spirit is imminent in man, thus man can reach this ideal in any age, provided only that his merits warrant it.[18]

The second phenomenon, the heavenly voice (bath kol) has been variously explained as a reverberating sound or an echo.[19] S. Lieberman describes it as "a voice or a word heard without seeing the person who uttered it, or a word heard from a person who was not conscious of the import of his saying."[20] The heavenly voice was an oracle, a sign from heaven "a kind of prophecy." Similar phenomena were in vogue among the Egyptians and the Christians.[21] The usual method of consulting the oracle was by hearing the Biblical verses uttered by children studying their lessons in school. The Palestinian Talmud records that when R. Johanan and Resh Lakish were about to embark on a journey to Babylonia to visit Samuel, they decided to consult the bath kol. They passed by a school and heard a child reciting the verse "And Samuel died," and concluded that Samuel had died.[22]

While these phenomena, like prophecy, implied a closeness to God or the receipt of a message from Him, they differed considerably from the older prophecy of the Biblical age. First and foremost, unlike the older prophets, no one who had divined a bath kol or who had been endowed with ruah ha-kodesh could claim to speak in the name of God. The old formula, "Thus says the Lord" is no longer present in Rabbinic times. Absent is the direct communication with God in which the prophet receives his message and transmits it to the people. God's message had already been revealed in the Torah and the books of the prophets. By late Persian and early Greek times the Jewish religious authorities declared an end to direct divine revelation and invested the authoritative interpretation and transmission of God's word into the hands of the successive line of Scribal-Pharisaic-Rabbinic scholars. From now on, "the scholar takes precedence over the prophet."[23] Judaism became a scriptural religion whose evolution was reflected in the interpretation of its sacred scripture.[24] The key to Jewish development was Midrash, the investigation into and interpretation of the Biblical text. The authentic bearers and interpreters of that text were the Rabbis. Their teachings were based on standardized rules of logic and exegesis. A Talmudic sage, even if endowed with the holy spirit determined law either by demonstrating the compelling logic of his position or by adducing scriptural proof for his position. He could say, "Scripture says...," but he could not claim, "Thus says the Lord...." The prophet confronted God directly; the sage--even if endowed with the holy spirit--confronted the text.

Significantly, within the Rabbinic scheme of things, neither the holy spirit nor the heavenly voice were essential ingredients in the lawmaking process.[25] A sage did not require the holy spirit to legitimize his authority. He was not a specially chosen individual whom God had selected to favor with a degree of extra closeness to Himself. Anyone could be a sage if he were endowed with the proper intellectual equipment. Rabbinic Judaism developed a democracy of learning open to all. The story of Rabbi Akiba, who spent his first forty years in ignorance of the Torah and later became the leading sage of his generation was a story that served as an example that could be emulated by anyone properly motivated and intellectually endowed.[26]

One of the most significant differences between the remnants of the prophecy in Rabbinic times and the older Biblical prophecy is that certain personal characteristics were required for the Rabbinic-prophetic remnants. A happy disposition, created by the joy derived from the performance of the commandments, engaging in hard work, and refraining from lightheadedness were necessary preconditions for the holy spirit.[27] Another tradition maintains that the holy spirit rests only on him who is wise, rich, mighty, and of good stature.[28] In addition, the holy spirit would rest on no one who had not passed through a rigorous moral and spiritual preparation. According to R. Phinehas ben Yair:

UMI

> Zeal brings man into a state of cleanliness, cleanliness advances man to purity, purity leads man to self-control, self-control to holiness, holiness to humility, humility to fear of sin, fear of sin to godliness, godliness makes man worthy of the holy spirit...[29]

Thus the attainment of the holy spirit is the end product of a process of spiritual training initiated by man. In Biblical prophecy, on the other hand, God initiated the contact. It was He who called the prophet, and the prophet was powerless to refuse the summons. God's call was sudden and unexpected; it fell on whomever God chose. The classical prophets did not train for their "call"; it just came.

Moreover, the holy spirit did not seize and possess its holder and dominate his life the same way as the older prophecy had done. In contrasting Biblical prophecy with the holy spirit in Rabbinic times, N. Glatzer writes:

> The prophet was moved by a divine pathos; he was forced and controlled by "a strong hand"; his mission revolutionized his life. In the Talmudic literature, the resting of the holy spirit upon a man means no sudden experience of revelation overwhelming him by its nearness and immediateness. Rather is it an awareness of divine presence, entering the human sphere with the aim to help and to guide.[30]

This conservative approach to pneumatic religious experience may well reflect an attempt on the Rabbis' part to establish firmly their own religious authority. As the Rabbinic leadership based its authority on the Midrash of an authoritative sacred text, it could not but look with disfavor and mistrust on "sudden outbreaks of prophetic spirit which intended to give an unexpected turn to the revealed and established religious order."[31]

While the attainment of the holy spirit was the highest state of spirituality attainable, nevertheless, the Rabbis took pains to set limits to the powers of one endowed with the holy spirit. Generally these powers seem to be confined to telling the future. Parzen writes that:

> an examination of the texts in which the Ruah Ha Kodesh is defined as prophecy, we believe, will show that by prophecy is understood the power to foretell events, the ability to foresee occurrences as well as the faculty to know what is in another person's mind.[32]

In addition to foretelling the future, which is connected with possession of the holy spirit, there is another characteristic of Biblical prophecy that is present in the Rabbinic remnants of prophecy--wonder-working. Wonder-working was present in Biblical prophecy and continued in somewhat muted form in Rabbinic times. There were among the Rabbis certain sages who distinguished themselves through wonder-working and the miraculous nature of their deeds. Honi ha-meaggel who was able to bring rain in time of drought and Hanina ben Dosa who performed many varied miracles are two well-known examples. They and others who performed wonders were in a direct line of development going back to Elijah.[33]

DEMOCRATIZING PROPHECY

In addition to setting limits to prophecy and the prophetic role, the Rabbis also democratized it. This was done in several ways. To the major and minor prophetic figures of the Bible were added other Biblical figures ranging from the antedeluvians to some of the kings. In all, according to one tradition, there were forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses.[34] While the designation of prophet adds to the stature of these individuals, the widespread application of the term, of course, diminishes its uniqueness.

An extreme form of this democratization is contained in Midrash Psalms which refers to the entire people of Israel as prophets.[35] The same idea is expressed in a number of earlier statements that declare that at certain times the holy spirit rested on the entire people of Israel. Thus, the holy spirit rested on the Israelites at the Red Sea as a reward for their belief in God. According to another opinion, the presence of the holy spirit in Israel was replaced by an angel after the sin of the Golden Calf.[36]

Rabbinic sources present a somewhat contradictory picture when discussing how widespread and available the holy spirit was during Rabbinic times. One Rabbinic tradition maintains that the holy spirit was one of the five things that disappeared with the destruction of the First Temple.[37] This apparently is referring to the end of classical prophecy. On the other hand, there are a number of Rabbinic statements that indicate that certain of the Rabbis were endowed with the holy spirit. Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai, Gamaliel II, Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai, R. Akiba, and R. Meir are mentioned as sages who possessed the holy spirit.[38] Hillel went so far as to claim that the entire people of Israel possessed the holy spirit, and this would enable them to devise a means of carrying out a ritual under unusual and difficult circumstances.[39]

The idea that the holy spirit or the Divine Presence (Shechinah) rests on the people of Israel is a natural corollary to the Rabbinic belief in the immanence of God. In describing the balance between ceremonialism and mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism, J. Abelson writes:

> The Rabbinic God had contact with the world; He ruled it from within, as well as from without; man's relations to God were not external and accidental; a mystic inner bond existed between them; God was not only viewed as the creator of the cosmos, but as the Shechinah, and the traces of Himself which were embedded in the heart were the workings of the Holy Spirit. There is of course, at first thought a clashing between the ideas of a religion of "statutory observances," or of "formulas that have become stereotyped and mechanical," and the ideas of a mystical religion. The religion of observances seems to mean mere conformity to outward routine, whereas the mystical religion seems based on the perennially fresh experiences of the inner life of the individual. But it is just the unique character of the Rabbinical religion, that both these sides of religion are emphasized, and to the detriment of neither.[40]

UMI

The concept that the holy spirit continued to dwell amidst the people of Israel, even after classical prophecy had come to and end was a reflection of the feeling that despite the vagaries of history, God was still ever close to His people. The holy spirit was the possession of those who actively sought it and who had acquired the appropriate physical and spiritual qualities that were condusive to its attainment. The lines of direct communication with God remained open.

GENTILE PROPHECY

Prophecy was the means through which God communicated with Israel in Biblical times. However, according to the Rabbis, this gift was not confined to Israel. Although the Bible does not mention Gentile prophets, the Rabbis do speak of a number of them, the most important being Balaam.[41] In this extension of prophecy beyond the confines of Israel, we see a further instance of Rabbinic democratization of prophecy with the concomittant diminution of the uniqueness of that phenomenon. Although, they believed that Gentiles partook of the gift of prophecy, the Rabbis did note several marked distinctions between Israelite and Gentile prophecy.

Prophetic power among the Gentiles was an imperfect instrument. Their prophetic perceptions were inexact as God communicated with them in curt language while He spoke to Israelite prophets in full length speech. Another difference between Israelite and Gentile prophecy was that God spoke to Israelite prophets in pure speech while He addressed Gentile prophets using imperfect language. Furthermore, whereas God spoke to the Israelite prophets during the day, He spoke to the Gentile prophets only at night thereby allowing only a fragmented vision attained through dreams.[42] R. Hanina bar Papa illustrated the difference between Israelite and Gentile prophecy with the following parable:

> This may be compared to a king who was together with his friend in a hall, with a curtain between them. When he conversed with his friend, he folded the curtain so that he saw him face to face; but with others he did not do so, but conversed with them while the separating curtain was drawn across, and they were unable to see him.[43]

In addition to these distinctions, the Rabbis detract from Gentile prophecy by claiming that God had given prophecy to the Gentiles not to benefit them but for the good of Israel. He did not want to give the nations an opportunity to claim that He had never favored them with the gift of prophecy as He had favored Israel:

> God did not place in the mouths of the nations what would serve them as a plea for the future enabling them to say You have kept us far away and have not given to us what you have given to Israel in this world. What did He do? Just as He raised up kings, prophets and sages for Israel, so He raised up these from the nations.[44]

Moreover, prophecy among the Gentiles came to an end much

UMI

earlier than had been the case in Israel. Gentile prophecy ended when Israel received the Torah,[45] or according to another tradition, with the death of Moses.[46]

Urbach maintains that the purpose of these traditions, like that mentioned above, is to prove that Israel's claim to chosenness was not an empty boast based on pride. Just as God had offered the Torah to the various nations and found none willing to accept it except Israel,[47] so, too, He had bestowed upon the nations the gift of prophecy with the possibility for spiritual betterment that it offered. Prophecy originally was not confined to Israel. However, only Israel proved worthy of the gift.[48] This point is made in a Rabbinic tradition which seeks to explain why Gentile prophecy ended:

> Look at the difference between the Israelite prophets and those of the Gentiles: the Israelite prophets warn the people against transgression as it says, "I have made you a watchman for the House of Israel (Ezek. 3:17) while the prophet who arose from the nations [Balaam] caused a breach [between people and God] and caused people to lose their portion in the world to come; moreover all of the [Israelite] prophets were merciful towards Israel and the nations, as Isaiah said, "Therefore my heart moans like a harp for Moab" (Isa. 16:11) and as Ezekiel said, "...take up a lamentation for Tyre" (Ezek. 27:2), but this cruel one [Balaam] sought to destroy an entire people for no reason. Therefore the episode of Balaam was written in order to make known why the Holy One, blessed be He, withdrew the holy spirit from the nations, because this one [Balaam] arose from them, and see what he did.[49]

Prophecy among the Gentiles ended, according to this tradition because of its misuse by Gentile prophets. The prime example of this for the Rabbis is Balaam. Balaam was a distinguished prophet, in one view, as great as Moses: "And there arose no more prophets in Israel as great as Moses (Deut. 34:10)--in Israel there arose no such prophet but one arose among the Gentiles, and who was this? It was Balaam the son of Beor." [50] This statement goes on to mention a number of ways in which the prophetic powers of Balaam even surpassed those of Moses: He knew who was speaking with him whereas Moses did not; he knew beforehand when God would speak to him and Moses did not. While God spoke to Moses only when the prophet was standing, He spoke to Balaam when he was in a prostrate position.[51]

Nonetheless, despite his distinction, Rabbinic tradition views Balaam as an example of the failure of a great potential for good to become realized. Balaam was a prophet who degenerated into a magician. He used his talents for evil. A Talmudic tradition records that he used his knowledge of the exact time of God's anger to invoke curses.[52] Another legend states that he was a counsellor to Pharoah and advised that the Israelite male children be cast into the river.[53] It was because of this misuse of his powers that Balaam caused God to remove prophecy from the Gentiles.

PROPHECY AND LAW

A further diminution of the role of the prophets is apparent in the Rabbinic discussions of the relationship of the prophets to the halacha. These discussions focus on two basic questions: 1) were the prophets empowered to make laws? and 2) was it permissible to derive laws from the books of the prophets? The sources that deal with these questions present a complex and contradictory picture. Basically, following E. Urbach's interpretation, there are two lines of thought that emerge from the source material. The first negates the role of the prophet in the halachic process while the second grants to the prophet a significant role. The *locus classicus* of the negative view is the statement in the *Siphre*:

> R. Judah said in the name of Samuel: three thousand laws were forgotten during the days of mourning for Moses. They [Israel] said to Joshua: ask. He replied: "It is not in heaven." They said to Samuel: ask. He replied: "These are the commandments"--no prophet has now the right to introduce anything new.[54]

Once the Torah had been given by God, divine revelation of the laws came to an end. The Torah was a finished product to which nothing should be added or subtracted. It required only elucidation through study. This was the province of the sage, not the prophet. One who claimed direct communication with God as his basic authority in

UMI

determining law was to be ignored. The text itself and the ingenuity of the sage in utilizing the various hermeneutic techniques through which the text was interpreted determined law.

God Himself is pictured in some Rabbinic sources as acquiescing, as it were, in this surrender of His power to intervene in halachic determination. A tradition in the name of the first generation Amora, Rab, states that before Moses died, he told Joshua to ask him about any points of law concerning which he was doubtful. When Joshua responded that he had no questions, Moses took offense at this seeming lack of modesty. As a result, Joshua was punished by forgetting three hundred laws and doubts arose in his mind about seven hundred others. When the Israelites approached Joshua with questions of law and he was unable to give adequate answers, the people were so angered that they wanted to kill the new leader. He thereupon sought guidance from God. He was rebuffed however, and God told him that it was impossible to tell him the laws in question since the Torah had already been given. Instead God advised Joshua to divert the people's attention with preparations for the conquest of Canaan.[55]

Despite the belief that prophets could not initiate new laws, the Bible itself records a number of laws or *ad hoc* regulations that had been made by the prophets. II Kings records that Elisha commanded the Israelites to destroy all of the trees in their war against Moab. This was in plain contradiction to Deut. 20:19.[56] Elijah had offered a sacrifice to God on Mt. Carmel thereby contravening the law in Deut. 12:11.[57]

Rabbinic literature provides several different answers to these incidents. All of them grant the prophet the right to make laws, but restrict this right very severely. One solution to the problem is contained in the Babylonian Talmud where it is stated that seventeen hundred laws based on hermeneutic exegesis were forgotten during the days of mourning for Moses. These laws were reinstituted by Othniel the son of Kenaz.[58] According to this view, the law-making capability of the prophets was limited to reinstitution of ancient usages that had fallen into disuse and which the prophets rediscovered through the application of their dialectical talents in the use of the hermeneutic rules through which the Torah was interpreted.

An alternative resolution of the problem is presented in the belief that prophetic law-making was restricted to cases of emergency and was of a temporary nature. Thus, the Palestinian Talmud explains:

> The building of the high place [for sacrifices] is not permitted except by a prophet. What is the reason? 'Take care not to sacrifice your burnt offerings in any place you like, but only in the place which the Lord will choose.' (Deut. 12:13-14) Yet Elijah offers

> sacrifices at a time when the high places are forbidden! R. Simlai says: God told him to do so.[59]

The prophet may institute new enactments even if they contradict the Torah. They are however, only for emergency cases, such as that of Elijah, where in his confrontation with the priests of Baal, the prophet sought to prove the uselessness and the impotence of the pagan god. Elijah's use of high places for sacrifices was limited to that one incident. It was not to serve as a precedent for future action.

The Babylonian Talmud contains a similar tradition:

> In all matters--if a prophet tells you to disobey the Torah heed his words.

The medieval commentator, Rashi, whose commentary on the Babylonian Talmud is the most basic and authoritative, explains this passage as referring to temporary enactments for emergency situations.[60]

The third and most drastic solution to the problem of prophetic law-making removed from the prophet any originality. Everything that the prophets were to say had been revealed already at Sinai. When the proper conditions obtained in later generations, the various prophets revealed their messages. This view is enunciated by Rabbi Isaac in Exodus Rabba;

> The prophets received from Sinai the messages they were to prophecy to subsequent generations, for Moses told Israel: 'But with him that stands here with me this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day... (Deut. 29:14).' It does not say 'that is not here

> standing with us this day," but just "with us this day"--these are the souls that will one day be created; and because there is not yet in them substance the word 'standing' is not used with them. Although they did not yet exist, still each one received his share [of the Torah].[61]

No prophet ever instituted a new law, for every law of prophetic derivation was included in the one and only genuine divine revelation--Sinai. N. Glatzer interprets this Rabbinic tradition as an attempt to restrain the pneumatic element in prophecy:

> In these comments we may recognize the Talmudic criticism of an important characteristic of prophecy: its immediateness, its unforeseen instant breaking into a historic situation. By tracing back the origin of the prophetic messages to the revelation at Sinai, the Talmud introduces the element of tradition into prophecy, thus restraining the danger inherent in uncontrolled prophetism.[62]

Rabbi Isaac's statement, however, does more than control the pneumatic element in prophecy. It goes on to declare that the words of the Sages as well as those of the prophets were revealed at Sinai.[63] Thus, the prophet is denied the uniqueness of being the sole channel through which the divine revelation becomes known as the generations pass. Rabbi Isaac raises the Oral Law to the level of divine revelation and the Sages to the level of the prophets as repositories of that revelation. Moreover, since the prophetic age had come to a close, the only legitimate channel remaining to Israel to determine God's will as revealed at Sinai was the process of interpretation of the Torah engaged in by the Rabbis.

Although, as we have seen, Rabbinic sources reflect a definite prejudice against prophetic law-making, they are considerably less definite on the question of whether or not a law may be derived from a verse in the prophetic books. It is quite clear that the Rabbis differentiated the scroll of the Torah from the scrolls of the prophetic and hagiographic books. While all three of these subdivisions of the Bible were considered sacred scripture, there were clear distinctions that underlined the unique sanctity that attached to the Torah. It was forbidden, for instance, to palce scrolls of the prophetic or hagiographic books on top of a Torah scroll. Nor could one put prophetic or hagiographic books together with the Torah in one scroll.[64] Obviously these rules pointed to a hierarchy in degrees of holiness among the various books of the Bible. However, while the prophetic books were less holy than the Torah, was it not possible to derive laws from them?

Rabbinic sources present a confusing picture on this question. An important rule dating from Tannaitic days states that "we do not learn laws from the prophetic books."[65] However, the Rabbis often obviated this dictum by citing prophetic texts with the qualifier "even though this is not proof of the matter, it is mentioned here."[66] Moreover, the Babylonian Talmud contains another formula in direct contradiction to the rule that laws are not derived from prophetic books. This formula states "we do not learn this from the Torah of Moses, we learn it from the words of the prophets."[67] E. Urbach cites numerous instances in Rabbinic literature where this formula is used, and a large number of other places where the formula is not used but where the Rabbis cite prophetic verses as proof texts for laws. We may conclude that while the rule "we do not learn laws from the prophetic books" is a reflection of the general Rabbinic tendency to diminish the significance of the prophets, the Rabbinic inclination to derive laws from Scripture or to find scriptural precedent for current practices led them to use Biblical proof texts other than from the Torah when the Torah offered no supporting text.

PROPHETS AS DEFENDERS AND COMFORTERS OF ISRAEL

As we have seen, the Rabbis viewed prophecy as a phenomenon of the past, and in various ways they deemphasized the significance of the prophets and of prophecy. However, there is one theme in Biblical prophetic literature that the Rabbis stressed, and in their portrayal of the major prophetic figures this theme stands out. For the Rabbis, the prophets were primarily the comforters and defenders of Israel. To be sure, the Rabbis often criticized the prophets when they spoke harshly of Israel. While not ignoring the chastising element of Biblical prophecy, the Rabbis nevertheless lived in an age when Israel needed consolation and the consolatory messages of the prophets allowed the Rabbis to transform the prophets into the instruments through which the comforting assurance of God's concern and love was transmitted to the people of Israel.

The Jewish people suffered two devastating blows during the first two centuries of the Common Era. The disastrous rebellions against Rome in 66-70 C.E. and in 132-135 C.E. represented major national calamities. At the same time, the growth and spread of Christianity as a competitive monotheistic religion and the ultimate success it achieved when it became the official state religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, effectively insured that Judaism would not spread far beyond the confines of the Jewish people. Moreover, the increasingly hostile attitude towards Judaism adopted by the spokesmen of the Church as early as the second century, further increased the sense of isolation and defeat felt by the Jews.[68] In spite of these setbacks, the Jews persevered in their own understanding of history. Even though defeated, the Jews knew that their suffering was part of God's master plan of history in which they still played the key role. While suffering and defeat were part of that plan, and indeed were a deserved punishment for disobedience to God (i.e. failing to fulfill the precepts of the Torah), the restoration of Israel was also part of God's plan. The Torah had spelled out the message clearly--if you obey God, blessing will ensue, but if you disobey, then the curse will surely fall. However, even if the curse falls, that is not the final chapter in the history of Israel. God is ever-willing to accept the repentence of His people, and ever desirous of restoring them. The message was repeated time and again by the prophets--disobedience leads to disaster, but disaster will be followed by redemption. In a time of national calamity when the disaster had already been experienced, Israel's sole comfort was the expectation of redemption as foretold by the prophets. The Babylonian Talmud relates that one day R. Akibah and his colleagues Rabban Gamaliel, R. Joshua, and R. Eleazar b. Azariah were walking on the Temple Mount and saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies. While the sight of the fox stalking through the ruins of the Temple grieved his colleagues, R. Akibah appeared quite happy. He explained that the prophet Micah had prophesied that Zion would become like a ploughed field; that prophecy had come true. However, Zechariah had said that "there shall sit old men and old women in the streets of Jerusalem." As Micah's prophecy of doom had been fulfilled, so would Zechariah's prophecy of restoration. The story ends with R. Akibah's companions exclaiming "Akibah, you have comforted us! Aikbah, you have comforted us!"[69]

However, it was precisely on this crucial issue--the future redemption of Israel foretold by the prophets--that the new triumphant Church challenged Judaism. As the Church identified itself as the true Israel, it followed that the "promises" of comfort and future glory contained in the books of the prophets referred to the Church and not to the Jewish people.[70] Moreover, the Jewish people was viewed as a hateful and rejected people. J. Parkes writes:

> The Jew as he is encountered in the pages of the fourth century writers is not a human being at all. He is a monster, a theological abstraction, of superhuman cunning, of malice, and more than superhuman blindness.[71]

Israel was a monstrosity. "There was not one single virtuous action in her history. She had been a perpetual disappointment to God, in spite of all the wonderful things He had done for her."[72] Israel's downfall lay in her blind and stubborn refusal to understand correctly the Scripture which God had imparted to her. The Old Testament was a prelude to the New. The prophets were pointing the way to Jesus, and their writings contained numerous allusions to him. The Jews, however, had not understood this.[73] In their words of comfort, the prophets were not speaking to the Jewish people, but to the Israel of believers in Jesus. Indeed, the prophets, persecuted by the Jewish people expressed their opprobrium of that wicked people.[74]

In the face of this attack, the Jewish religious leaders sought to salvage the honor of Israel. God had not abandoned Israel. His promise of redemption was still intact. The covenant between God and Israel remained the basic fact of history. Assurance of this and of God's ever-present concern and love for Israel became one of the major tasks of the Sages. It is only in this context that we can understand properly the Rabbinic portrayal of the major Biblical prophets.

The primary function of the prophet, according to the Rabbis, is to defend and comfort Israel. Far from despising Israel, the prophet manifested a deep and abiding love for her.[75] This despite his many trials and tribulations at the hands of an often ungrateful people. Indeed, it was the prophet's destiny to suffer the fate of the unrequited lover. He could never hope to be loved in his own day, for his message of chastisement was not readily accepted by his society. Yet, compelled by the divine command and by his love for Israel, the prophet went about his task in spite of the personal dangers involved.[76]

The prophet's love for Israel caused him to defy not only Israel, but God as well. The Mekilta contains a statement by R. Nathan explaining Jonah's flight from God as an attempt to commit suicide rather than lead the inhabitants of Ninveh to repentance and thus dramatize the contrast between the repentant Ninvehites and the sinning Jews.[77] The Mekilta follows R. Nathan's comment with a general statement:

> thus you find that the Patriarchs and the prophets offered their lives on behalf of Israel. As to Moses, what did he say: "Yet now, if You will forgive their sin, and if not blot me out of the book which You have written...(Ex. 32:32)". As to David, what did he say? "Lo, I have sinned and I have committed iniquity; but what have these sheep done? Let your anger be against me and against my father's house". (II Samuel 24:17). Thus you find everywhere that the Patriarchs and the prophets offered their lives on behalf of Israel.[78]

The ideal standard which the Rabbis set for the prophet is contained in this early Tannaitic source. The prophet's love for Israel is so great that he is willing not only to face the people's anger, but also to be Israel's advocate before God. The prophet has not rejected his people. His denunciations of their sins are made in anguish which is born of love. Indeed, the Rabbis often criticized the prophets for uncomplimentary remarks about Israel.[79] It was not the prophet's role to criticize Israel. Although he was the instrument through which Israel received God's chastisement, it was unseemly for the prophet himself to engage in criticism of Israel. On the contrary, his role was to defend them and to attempt to assuage God's anger against them. Exodus Rabba contains a description of the prophets' intervention on behalf of Israel following the incident of the Golden Calf. When God asked for whom they were pleading, the prophets answered "for Your children." God, however, denied that they were His children declaring that "they are only My children as long as they perform My will, but not otherwise." The prophets then replied:

> You say that they are not Your children, yet by their faces it can be recognized that they are, for it says, "All that see them shall acknowledge them that they are the seed which the Lord has blessed (Isa. 61:9)". Just as a father has mercy on his children though they have sinned, so must You have mercy on them.[80]

Of equal importance with his role as defender of Israel, was the prophet's function of imparting comfort and hope to his people. So important was this task that God Himself taught the prophets how to comfort Israel. Pesikta Rabbati contains a description of Israel refusing to accept comfort from the prophets:

> The Holy One, blessed be He, sent prophets, to go comfort Zion. Thus Hosea came saying: "Rise up and receive the cup of comforting. The Holy One, blessed be He, sent me to comfort you." Zion asked: What comfort do you bring me? Hosea replied: What the Holy One, blessed be He, said through me: "Gone is My wrath. Henceforth I will be as dew unto Israel (Hosea 14:6)". Zion retorted: Keep your comforting to yourself. Yesterday you reported God as saying, "Therefore am I become unto them as a lion; as a leopard will I watch by the way (Hosea 13:7)". And now you claim He says, I will be as the dew unto Israel. Which words am I to believe, the former or the latter? In short, the words you now bring me are vain comforting. Do you presume to comfort me with such vanity? For it turns out that the words you claim to bring back from God contradict one another.[81]

Other prophets followed Hosea in attempting to comfort Israel. However, each of them--Joel, Amos, Nahum, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi--were all rebuffed by Israel because of the contradictory nature of their prophecies. Exasperated, the prophets came before God complaining that Israel had refused to accept their comfort. There is an implicit criticism of the prophets here even for their legitimate chastisement of Israel; their rebukes of Israel, though directed from God, reflected in some way a diminished level of love for Israel. The prophets were, therefore, inadequate instruments for comforting Israel. The legend concludes with God inviting the prophets to join Him while He goes to comfort Israel. From Him, the prophets will learn how to bring consolation to Zion and her people.[82]

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

1. PR, 35, p. 160a.

אם חומה היא נבנה עליה טירת כסף ואם דלת היא נצור עליה
לוח ארז כנגד מי אמר שלמה למקרא הזה לא אמרו אלא כנגד
כנסת ישראל שבשעה שנבנה הבית האחרון לא שרתה [בו]
שכינה שכך אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא אם עולים ישראל כולם
תשרה שכינה ואם לאו לא ישתמשו אלא בבת קול.

"'If she be a wall we will build upon her a turret of silver; but if she be like a door we will frame her with boards of cedar (Cant. 8:9)'. What did Solomon mean by this verse? He meant to praise the congregation of Israel [for its steadfastness, even though] when the Second Temple was built the Divine Presence did not come to dwell in it. The Holy One, blessed be He had said: If all of Israel returns to the Land, the Divine Presence will dwell in it; but if they do not, they will have only the echo of a heavenly voice".

Cf. also TB Yoma, 9b.

2. Tosephta Sotah, 13:2.

מעשה שנכנסו חכמים לבית גוריון ביריחו ושמעו בת קול
אומרת יש כאן אדם שראוי לרוח הקודש אלא שאין דורו זכאי
לכך ונתנו עיניהם בהלל הזקן...שוב פעם אחת היו יושבין
ביבנה ושמעו בת קול אומרת יש כאן אדם שראוי לרוח הקודש
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UMI

"It happened once that the Sages were meeting in the house of Gorian in Jericho and they heard a heavenly voice saying: There is one here who is worthy of the holy spirit but his generation is unworthy of this. The Sages looked at Hillel the Elder...Another time they were at Jabneh and heard a heavenly voice saying: There is one here who is worthy of the holy spirit but the generation is unworthy of this. The Sages looked at Samuel the Younger."

Cf. also *TB* Sanhedrin, 11a.

3. *Seder Olam Rabba*, 30, pp. 139-140.

הוא אלכסנדר מוקדון שמלך י"ב שנה עד כאן היו הנביאים
מתנבאים ברוח הקודש מכאן ואילך הט אזנך ושמע דברי חכמים.

4. Ephraim E. Urbach, "Matai Paskah ha-Nevuah", *Tarbiz*, XVII, (Oct., 1945), p. 7.

5. *TB Sanhedrin*, 11a.

תנו רבנן משמתו הנביאים האחרונים חגי זכריה ומלאכי
נסתלקה הנבואה מישראל ואף על פי כן היו משתמשין בבת קול.

"Our Rabbis taught: Since the death of the last prophets--Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi--prophecy has departed from Israel. Nevertheless, they made use of the heavenly voice."

Cf. also *TosephtaSotah*, 13:2.

6. *PK*, 13:14.

מה בנימין אחרון לכל השבטים אף ירמיה אחרון לכל הנביאים

לא כבר נתנבאו אחריו חגי זכריה ומלאכי ר׳ לעזר ור׳ שמואל
בר נחמן ר׳ לעזר א׳ קיצרי נבואה היו א"ר שמואל בר נחמן
כבר היתה נבואה פקודה בידן ביד חגי זכריה ומלאכי.

"...just as Benjamin was the last of all the tribe fathers, so Jeremiah was the last of all the prophets. But did not Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesy after him? Rabbi Eleazar and Rabbi Samuel bar Nahman differ. Rabbi Eleazar said: Their periods of prophecy were brief. Rabbi Samuel bar Nahman said: [Though they did not utter their prophecies until after Jeremiah's time], the prophecy they were to utter had already been entrusted [in his days] to the three--to Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi."

7. Mekilta Bo, on Ex. 12:1, pp. 5-6.

וכן אתה מוצא בברוך בן נריה שהיה מתרעם לפני המקום...
מה נשתניתי אני מכל תלמידי הנביאים יהושע שמש משה ושרתה
עליו רוח הקודש אלישע שמש אליהו ושרתה עליו רוח הקודש
מה נשתניתי אני מכל תלמידי הנביאים בא וראה מה המקום
משיבו כה תאמר אליו כה אמר ה׳ הנה אשר בניתי אני הורס
וגו׳ ואתה תבקש לך גדולות אל תבקש...אמר ברוך בן נריה
אם אין כרם אין סייג אם אין צאן אין רועה.

"And thus you find in the case of Baruch ben Neriah who complained to God...why am I different from all of the disciples of the prophets? Joshua served Moses and the holy spirit rested on him; Elisha served Elijah and the holy spirit rested on him.

Why am I different from all of the disciples of the prophets? Come and see how God answered him: 'Thus you [Jeremiah] will say to him, thus says the Lord: Behold that which I have built I will break down, etc. (Jer. 45:4) And yet you seek great things for yourself. Seek them not (verse 5)...'He said: Baruch ben Neriah, if there is no vineyard, there is no need of a fence; if there is no flock, there is no need of a shepherd."

Other Rabbinic sources portray Baruch as a prophet. Cf. Louis Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, (1946-1961), VI, p. 411, n.65.

8. Cf. below, p. 93, n. 20.

9. Joel 3:1-2. Cf. also Tanhuma (Buber) Behaalothecha, 11, p. 50.

כשחרב בית המקדש נגנזה המנורה וזה אחד מחמשה דברים
שנגנזו הארון והמנורה והאש ורוח הקודש וכרובים וכשישוב
הקב"ה ברחמיו ויבנה ביתו והיכלו הוא מחזירן למקומן.

"When the [first] Temple was destroyed, the candelabrum was hidden away, and this was one of the five things that were hidden away: the ark, the candelabrum, the fire, the holy spirit, and the cherubim. When the Holy One, blessed be He, will, in His mercy, rebuild His house and His temple, He will restore these to their place." The holy spirit is synonymous

UMI

with prophecy. Cf. ARN(A), 34 p. 102, and Herbert Parzen, "The Ruah Hakodesh in Tannaitic Literature", Jewish Quarterly Review N.S, XX, (1929/1930), pp. 66 ff. For references in medieval Jewish literature to the reappearance of prophecy in the messianic age, cf. Jacob B. Agus, "The Prophet in Modern Hebrew Literature", Hebrew Union College Annual, XXVIII, (1957), pp. 289-324.

10. Josephus, Wars, I, 2:8. "...for the Deity conversed with him, -- and he was not ignorant of anything that was to come afterwards..."
Cf. Antiquities, XX, 5:1; 8:6 for other "prophets" mentioned by Josephus.

11. Josephus, Contra Apion, 1:8. "...it is true our history has been written since Artaxerxes, very particularly, but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former (books) by our forefathers, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time...".
Cf. the discussion by E. Urbach, Mattai, pp. 3-5, and Franklin W. Young, "Jesus the Prophet: A Re-examination", Journal of Biblical Literature, LXVIII, (1949), pp. 289-290.

12. M.H. Shepherd, Jr., "Prophet in the N.T.", The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: 1962),

III, p. 919, and F.W. Young, "Jesus the Prophet", pp. 285-286. Young cites the following verses in which Jesus is referred to as a prophet: Matthew 21:11, 46; Mark 6:1-4; 15; 8:27-28; Luke 7:16; 9:8; 13:35; 24:19; John 4:4.

13. A. Lukyn Williams, Adversus Judaeos (Cambridge: 1935), p. 19.

14. Ibid., p. 21.

15. E. Urbach, "Mattai", p. 11.

Cf. also, Nahum N. Glatzer, "A Study of the Talmudic Interpretation of Prophecy", Review of Religion, XI, (1946), p. 117.

16. TB Baba Bathra, 12b.

א"ר יוחנן מיום שחרב בית המקדש ניטלה נבואה מן הנביאים וניתנה לשוטים ולתינוקות.

"Rabbi Johanan said: Since the time of the destruction of the [first] Temple, prophecy has been taken from the prophets and given to fools or infants."

17. Cf. above, n. 9.

18. J. Abelson, The Immanence of God in Rabbinic Literature (New York: 1969), p. 260.

19. Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine (New York: 1962), p. 194.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., pp. 196-198.

22. TY, Shabbat, 6, 9, 8c.

ר׳ יוחנן ורשב"ל הוו מתחמדין מיחמי אפוריי דשמואל אמרין
נלך אחר שמיעת בת קול עברין קומי סידרא שמעון קליה
דטלייא ושמואל מת וסיימון וכן הוות ליה.

"Rabbi Johanan and Resh Lakish wanted to visit Samuel. They said: Let us follow what the heavenly voice says. They passed by a school and heard the voice of a young student [reciting the verse]: 'And Samuel died (I Sam. 28:3)'. And they took it as an omen, and indeed, it was so".

See, however, TB Hullin, 95b, where the opposite conclusion is arrived at.

23. TB Baba Bathra, 12a.

חכם עדיף מנביא.

"The sage is superior to the prophet".

The same sentiment is expressed in the Palestinian Talmud:

חמורין דברי זקנים מדברי נביאים.

"The words of the Sages are more precious than those of the prophets". TY Avodah Zarah, 2, 8, 41c.

24. TY Avodah Zarah, 2, 8, 41c.

נביא וזקן למה הן דומין למלך ששילח שני סימנטירין שלו
למדינה על אחד מהן כתב אם אינו מראה לכם חותם שלי
וסימנטירין שלי אל תאמינו לו ועל אחד מהן כתב אע"ף
שאינו מראה לכם חותם שלי וסימנטירין שלי האמינו לו
כך בנביא כתיב ונתן אליך אות או מופת ברם הכא על פי

התורה אשר יורוך.

"To what may the prophet and the sage be compared? To [the situation in which] a king sent two messengers [with his seal] to a province. Concerning one he wrote, 'If he does not show you my seal and my stamp do not believe him.' Concerning the other he wrote, 'Even though he does not show you my seal and my stamp believe him.' So, concerning a prophet it is written: 'And gives you a sign or a portent (Deut. 13:2)', but here [concerning the sage it is written]: "you shall act in accordance with the instruction given you...(Deut. 17:11)'".

25. However, there were some Rabbis who did rely upon the holy spirit or the heavenly voice to give some indication as to the proper determination of a law. Cf. Ephraim E. Urbach, "Halacha u-Nevuah," Tarbiz, XVIII, (Oct., 1946), pp. 10-12 and the sources cited there. Along the same lines, the Talmud contains a number of legal disputes that the Rabbis were unable to resolve. Their solution was to await the return of Elijah in the messianic era. Cf. Michael Guttman, Mafteach ha-Talmud (Breslau: 1924), III, pp. 52-55, and Eliezer Margalit, Eliahu ha-Navi (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1960), pp. 145-155.

26. ARN(B), 6, p. 29. Cf. below, p.77 for a different Rabbinic tradition about the beginning of Rabbi Akiba's

scholarly career.

27. TB Shabbat, 30b.

שאין שכינה שורה לא מתוך עצבות ולא מתוך עצלות ולא מתוך
שחוק ולא מתוך קלות ראש ולא מתוך שיחה ולא מתוך דברים
בטלים אלא מתוך דבר שמחה של מצוה.

Cf. also TB Pesahim, 117a. TY Succah, 5,1, 55a declares:

אמר ר' יונה יונה בן אמתי מעולי רגלים היה ונכנס
לשמחת בית השואבה ושרה עליו רוח הקדש ללמדך שאין
רוח הקדש שורה אלא על לב שמח.

"Rabbi Jonah said: Jonah the son of Amitai was a pilgrim [who used to go to Jerusalem for the Festivals] and participated in the celebration of the Drawing of the Water, and the holy spirit rested on him. This is to teach you that the holy spirit rests only on one who has a joyful heart".
The festival of the Drawing of the Water was a time of great joy.

28. TB Shabbat, 92a.

אין השכינה שורה אלא על חכם גבור ועשיר ובעל קומה.

29. Mishnah Sotah, 9:15.

רבי פנחס בן יאיר אומר זריזות מביאה לידי נקיות
ונקיות מביאה לידי טהרה וטהרה מביאה לידי פרישות
ופרישות מביאה לידי קדשה וקדשה מביאה לידי ענוה
וענוה מביאה לידי יראת חטא ויראת חטא מביאה לידי
חסידות וחסידות מביאה לידי רוח הקדש.

30. N. Glatzer, "Talmudic Interpretation", p. 124. Cf. also Max Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York: 1952), pp. 194-272.

31. N. Glatzer, "Talmudic Interpretation", p. 124.

32. H. Parzen, "Ruah Hakodesh", p. 67.

33. "Sages", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, XIV, pp. 638-639. For the story of Honi's rain-making, cf. *Mishnah Taanit*, 3:8. For a critical discussion of the exploits of Hanina ben Dosa, cf. Geza Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Leiden: 1975), pp. 178-214.

34. J. Abelson, *Immanence*, pp. 258-266. Cf. also *TB Megillah*, 14a.

35. *Midrash Psalms*, 111:1.

> ...לפי שהקב"ה מגלה סוד [לישראל וכן הוא אומר כי לא
> יעשה ה' אלהים דבר כי אם גלה סודו] אל עבדיו הנביאים
> וכן ישראל נקראו נביאים שנאמר אל תירא עבדי יעקב...

36. The sources are quoted in N. Glatzer, "Talmudic Interpretation", p. 120.

37. Cf. above, p.34 , n. 9.

38. N. Glatzer, "Talmudic Interpretation", p. 123 and J. Abelson, *Immanence*, pp. 259-260.

39. *Tosephta Pesahim*, 4:1-2.

הניחו להם רוח הקודש עליהם אם אינן נביאים בני נביאים הם.

"[Hillel said] Let them be, for the holy spirit rests on them. If they themselves are not prophets, they

UMI

are the sons of prophets...". Cf. also Ephraim E. Urbach, The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs (Jerusalem: 1975), pp. 576-577.

40. J. Abelson, Immanence, p. 284.

41. Ephraim E. Urbach, "Derashot Hazal al Neviei Umot ha-Olam ve-al Bilaam", Tarbiz, XXV, (April, 1956), pp. 272-289. Cf. also J. Abelson, Immanence, pp. 275-277.

42. Leviticus R., 1:13.

> אין חקב"ה נגלה על נביאי אומות העולם אלא בחצי דבור
> היך מה דאת אמר ויקר אלהים אל בלעם אבל נביאי ישראל
> בדבור שלם דכת' ויקרא אל משה אמר ר' יששכר דכפר מנדי...
> אין לשון זה ויקר אלא לשון טומאה היך מה דאת אמ כי
> יהיה בך איש אשר לא יהיה טהור מקרה לילה אבל נביאי ישראל
> בלשון קדושה בלשון טהרה בלשון ברור...אמ ר' יוסי בן
> ביבא אין הקב"ה נגלה על אומות העולם אלא בלילה בשעה
> שדרך בני אדם פורשין זה מזה...

Cf. also, Genesis R., 52:5. Tanhuma (Buber) Vayishlach, 24, p. 176 contains a similar contrast in the different ways in which God appears to the wicked and the righteous. On the significance of dreams for Christian and pagan forms of prophecy and its lack of significance for Israelite prophecy, cf. E. Urbach, "Derashot", pp. 279-280, and S. Lieberman, Hellenism, p. 198.

43. Leviticus R., 1:13.

ר' חנינא בר פפא אמ' משל למלך שהיה הוא ואוהבו נתונין
בטרקלין וביניהן וילון כשהוא מדבר עם אוהבו מקפיל את
הוילון עד שרואהו פנים אל פנים ומדבר עמו אבל לאחרים
אינו עושה כן אלא מדבר עמהם ומחצת הוילון פרוסה ואינן
רואין אותו.

44. Tanhuma (Buber) Balak, 1, p. 132.

...שלא הניח הקב"ה פתחון פה לאומות העולם לעתיד לבא
לומר שאתה רחקתנו ולא נתת לנו כמו שנתת לישראל בעולם
הזה מה עשה הקב"ה כשם שהעמיד מלכים ונביאים וחכמים
לישראל כך העמיד מאומות העולם.

Cf. also, Numbers R., 20:1.

45. Seder Olam Rabba, 21, p. 93.

בלעם ואביו ואיוב מארץ עוץ ואליפז התימני ובלדד השוחי
וצופר הנעמתי ואליהו בן ברכאל הבוזי אילו הנביאים
שנתנבאו לאומות עד שלא ניתנה התורה לישראל אבל
משניתנה התורה לישראל פסקה רוח הקודש מן האומות.

"Balaam and his father, and Job from the land of Uz, and Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamite, and Elihu the son of Beracheel the Buzite--these are the prophets who prophesied to the nations before the Torah was given to Israel; but from the time when the Torah was given to Israel, the holy spirit ceased from among the nations...".

Cf. also, Leviticus R., 1:13 where it is maintained that prophesy existed among the nations until the building of the Tent of Meeting.

46. TB Baba Bathra, 15b.

בתר דשכיב משה מי שריא שכינה על אוה"ע.

"After the death of Moses did the Divine Presence rest on the nations?"

47. Cf. L. Ginzberg, Legends, III, pp. 80-82, and VI, p. 30, n. 181 and the sources cited there.

48. E. Urbach, "Derashot", pp. 273-274.

49. Tanhuma (Buber) Balak, 1, pp. 132-133.

ראה מה בין נביאי ישראל לנביאי אומות העולם נביאי ישראל
מזהירים את האומה על העבירות וכן הוא אומר צופה נתתיך
לבית ישראל ונביא שעמד מן האומות העמיד פירצה לאבד הבריות
מן העולם הבא ולא עוד אלא כל הנביאים היו במדת רחמים
על ישראל ועל אומות העולם שכן אמר ישעיה על כן מעי
למואב ככנור יהמו וכן יחזקאל אמר שא על צור קינה וזה
אכזרי עמד לעקור אומה שלמה על חנם על לא דבר לכך
נכתבה פרשת בלעם להודיע למה סילק הקב"ה רוח הקדש
מאומות העולם שזה עמד מהן וראה מה עשה.

Cf. also, Numbers R., 20:1.

50. Siphre to Deut. 34:10, p. 430.

ולא קם נביא בישראל כמשה בישראל לא קם אבל באומות
העולם קם ואיזה זה בלעם בן בעור.

51. Ibid.

משה לא היה יודע מי מדבר עמו ובלעם היה יודע מי מדבר
עמו...משה לא היה יודע מתי מדבר עמו עד שנדבר עמו
ובלעם היה יודע מתי מדבר עמו...משה לא היה מדבר עמו
אלא כשהיה עומד...ובלעם היה מדבר עמו כשהוא נופל...

For a differing interpretation of Balaam's prostrate position, however, see Rashi's comment on Num. 24:4.

52. TB Avodah Zarah, 4a-b.

...ואין כל בריה יכולה לכוין אותה רגע חוץ מבלעם
הרשע דכתיב ביה וי ודע דעת עליון.

"...And no creature can determine that time [of God's anger] except for Balaam the wicked, as it says, 'And he [who] has knowledge of the Most High (Num. 24:16)'".

Cf. also TB Sanhedrin, 105b.

53. TB Sotah, 11a.

א"ר חייא בר אבא א"ר סימאי שלשה היו באותה עצה בלעם
ואיוב ויתרו בלעם שיעץ נהרג איוב ששתק נידון ביסורין
יתרו שברח זכו מבני בניו שישבו בלשכת הגזית.

"Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba said in the name of Rabbi Simai: There were three who gave advice at that time [to Pharoah]--Balaam, Job, and Jethro. Balaam, who advised [killing the Israelite male children] was punished by death; Job, who remained silent, was punished with suffering; Jethro, who fled, merited that his descendents sit in the Chamber of Hewn Stones [the meeting place of the Sanhedrin]...".

Cf. also, L. Ginzberg, Legends, II, pp. 255-256, and V, p. 393, n. 21.

On the identification of Balaam with Jesus in Rabbinic literature, cf. L. Ginzberg, Legends, VI, pp. 123-124; R. Travers Herford, Christianity in Talmud and Midrash (Clifton: 1966), pp. 63-78; E. Urbach, "Derashot", pp. 281 ff.

54. TB Temurah, 16a.

אמר רבי יהודה אמר שמואל שלשת אלפים הלכות נשתכחו בימי אבלו של משה אמרו לו ליהושע שאל א"ל לא בשמים היא אמרו לו לשמואל שאל אמר להם אלה המצות שאין הנביא רשאי לחדש דבר מעתה.

Cf. also TB Shabbat, 104a; TB Megillah, 2b; TB Yoma, 80a, and the dispute between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Joshua cited below, p. 81-82.

A similar sentiment but expressed in less absolute terms is found in the statement that the only legal enactment made by the prophets was the reading of the scroll of Esther. TB Megillah, 14a.

55. TB Temurah, 16a.

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב בשעה שנפטר משה רבינו לגן עדן אמר לו ליהושע שאל ממני כל ספיקות שיש לך אמר לו רבי כלום הנחתיך שעה אחת והלכתי למקום אחר לא כך כתבת בי ומשרתו יהושע בן נון נער לא ימיש מתוך האהל מיד תשש כחו של יהושע ונשתכחו ממנו שלש מאות הלכות ונולדו לו שבע מאות ספיקות ועמדו כל ישראל להרגו אמר לו הקב"ה לומר לך אי אפשר לך וטורדן במלחמה.

56. II Kings 3:19. "And you shall smite every fortified city and every choice city, and shall fell every good

tree, and stop all fountains of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones".

57. I Kings, 18. For Ezekiel's role in law-making, see below, pp. 171-173.

58. TB Temurah, 16a.

אלף ושבע מאות קלין וחמורין וגזירות שוות ודקדוקי
סופרים נשתכחו בימי אבלו של משה אמר רבי אבהו אעפ"כ
החזירן עתניאל בן קנז מתוך פלפולו.

Ch. Tchernovitz suggests that the prophets were the repositories of the laws going back to Sinai. Many of these laws fell into disuse because of the corruption of Israel's political leaders and the assimilation of pagan elements into Jewish life. The prophets, acting almost like a secret underground, maintained the ancient tradition in its purity. This explanation assumes that the laws were never forgotten, and consequently ignores the Talmud's point that the laws were rediscovered through the dialectical skill of the prophets. Chaim Tchernovitz, Toledot ha-Halacha (New York: 1936), I, part II, p. 106.

59. TY Megillah, 1,13,72c.

אין הבמה ניתרה אלא בנביא מה טעמא השמר לך פן תעלה

עירותיך בכל מקום אשר תראה כי אם במקום וגו' ואליהו מקריב
בשעת איסור הבמות א"ר שמלאי דבירא א"ל וכדרכך עשיתי.

60. E. Urbach, "Halacha", p. 5.

61. Exodus R., 28:6.

אמר ר' יצחק מה שהנביאים עתידים להתנבאות בכל דור ודור
קבלו מחר סיני שכן משה אומר להם לישראל כי את אשר ישנו
פה עמנו עמד היום לפני ה' אלהינו ואת אשר איננו פה עמנו
היום עמנו עמד היום אין כתיב כאן אלא עמנו היום אלו
הנשמות העתידות להבראות שאין בהם ממש שלא נאמרה בהם
עמידה שאף על פי שלא היו באותה שעה כל אחד ואחד קבל
את שלו.

Cf. also, Tanhuma Jethro, 11.

62. N. Glatzer, "Talmudic Interpretation", p. 127.

63. Exodus R., 28:6.

ולא כל הנביאים בלבד קבלו מסיני נבואתן אלא אף החכמים
בכל רור ודור כל אחד ואחד קבל את שלו מסיני.

"It was not only the prophets who received their prophecy at Sinai but also the Sages of every generation, each one received his [teachings] at Sinai".

Both Glatzer and Urbach view this statement as an anti-Christian polemic. The Church had appropriated the prophets for its own use. They foretold the coming of Jesus, and therefore, became central figures in the Christian outlook. As a reaction to this, the Rabbis claimed that while the prophets were God's

UMI

gift to Israel, so was the Oral Law. Indeed, it was God's gift of the Oral Law that made Israel unique, and therefore, the sage--the bearer of the Oral Law--was greater than the prophet. N. Glatzer, "Talmudic Interpretation", pp. 127-128, and E. Urbach, "Halacha", pp. 5-6.

64. Cf. Tractate Soferim, 3:1 and TB Megillah, 27a. The sources are cited in E. Urbach, "Halacha", p. 3.

65. Cf. TB Hagigah, 10b and TB Niddah, 23a.

דברי תורה מדברי קבלה לא ילפינן.

Cf. also the discussion in E. Urbach, "Halacha", pp. 12-13.

66. E. Urbach, "Halacha", p. 13. For a list of the more significant laws derived from prophetic books, cf. Ch. Tchernovitz, Toledot ha-Halacha, I, pp. 102-103.

67. TB Rosh Hashanah, 7a.

מתורת משה לא למדנו מדברי קבלה למדנו.

Cf. E. Urbach, "Halacha", p. 17 and footnotes there.

68. James W. Parkes, The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue (Cleveland: 1961), p. 96.

69. TB Makkot, 24b.

שוב פעם אחת היו עולין לירושלים...כיון שהגיעו להר הבית
ראו שועל שיצא מבית קדשי הקדשים התחילו הן בוכין ור"ע
מצחק...אלא תלה הכתוב נבואתו של זכריה בנבואתו של אוריה
באוריה כתיב לכן בגללכם ציון שדה תחרש בזכריה כתיב עוד
ישבו זקנים וזקנות ברחובות ירושלים עד שלא נתקיימה

נבואתו של אוריה הייתי מתיירא שלא תתקיים נבואתו של זכריה
עכשיו שנתקיימה נבואתו של אוריה בידוע שנבואתו של זכריה
מתקיימת בלשון הזה אמרו לו עקיבא ניחמתנו עקיבא ניחמתנו.

70. J. Parkes, Conflict, p. 100.

71. Ibid., p. 158.

72. Ibid., p. 159.

73. An example of the Church's interpretation of the role of the prophets can be found in the Catholic Biblical Encyclopedia, ed. John E. Steinmueller and Kathryn Sullivan, (New York: 1956), p. 345: "Jeremias is one of the most beautiful of the O.T. figures of Christ. Fearless, strong, sympathetic, tender, he richly earned by his life of pain and suffering the preeminent position that his writings occupy in the liturgy of the Passion and Death of Our Lord". "His messianic message is not as clear as that of Isaias, but he had perhaps the greater privilege of a large typical share in Christ's sufferings". Commenting on the Christian adoption of Old Testament heroes, James Parkes writes: "No people has ever paid so high a price for the greatness of its own religious leaders, and for the outspoken courage with which they held up an ideal and denounced whatever seemed to them to come short of it. If they had known the use that was to be made of their writings, then,

indeed, many of the prophets might have obeyed literally the sarcasm of Irenaeus when he says that 'the Jews, had they been cognizant of our future existence, and that we should use these proofs from the Scriptures which declare that all other nations will inherit eternal life, but that they who boast themselves as being the house of Jacob are disinherited from the grace of God, would never have hesitated themselves to burn their own Scriptures'". J. Parkes, Conflict, p. 106.

74. J. Parkes, Conflict, p. 162.

75. Cf. below, pp. 241 ff. and pp. 261 ff.

76. The righteous are to take a lesson from the prophets who risked their own personal safety by chastising Israel for its own betterment. Cf. Tanhuma Tazria, 9 end.

לסבול הכאות מישראל כמו שהיו הנביאים...

"[The righteous are enjoined] to suffer blows from Israel just as the prophets had".
On Rabbinic treatment of Israel's persecution of the prophets, see below, pp. 136 ff. and pp. 244 ff.

77. Mekilta Bo on Ex. 12:1, p. 4.

רבי נתן אומר לא הלך יונה אלא לאבד עצמו בים שנאמר
ויאמר אליהם שארני והטילוני אל הים.

"Rabbi Nathan says: Jonah went to commit suicide in the sea, as it says, 'And he said to them: take me and cast me into the sea (Jonah 1:12)'".

78. Ibid.

וכן תמצא האבות והנביאים היו נותנים עצמם על ישראל במשה
מה הוא אומר ועתה אם תשא חטאתם ואם אין מחני נא מספרך
אשר כתבת...בדוד מהו אומר הנה אנכי חטאתי ואנכי העויתי
ואלה הצאן מה עשו תהי נא ידך בי ובבית אבי הא בכל מקום
אתה מוצא האבות והנביאים נתנו נפשם על ישראל.

79. See below, pp. , and M. Aberbach,"Hinuch le-Ahavat Yisrael" (forthcoming article in Sheviley Hahinuch).

80. Exodus R., 46:4.

...התחילו מבקשים עליהם רחמים...אמר הקב"ה על מי אתם
מבקשים אמרו לו על בניך אמר להם אינן בני אם עושין
רצוני הם בני ואם לאו אינן בני...אמרו הנביאים להקב"ה
הרי אתה אומר שאינן בניך ובפניהם הם נכרים שנאמר כל
ראיהם יכירום כי הם זרע ברך ה׳ מה דרכו של אב שמרחם
על בניו אף על פי שסרחו כך אתה צריך לרחם עליהם.

81. PR, 29-30b, p. 138b.

...שהקב"ה משלח את הנביאים לילך לנחם את ציון בא הושע
אומר לה עמדי וקבלי כוס תנחומים הקב"ה שלחני אליך לנחמך
אמרה לו מה בידיך אומר לה כך אמר לי הקב"ה כטל אותו
הכעס מעכשיו אהיה כטל לישראל אמרה לו הושע הרי תנחומים
נתונים לך אתמול אמרת ואהי להם כמו שחל כנמר אפגשם
כדוב שכול ועכשיו אתה אומר אהיה כטל לישראל לאילו
נאמין לראשונים או לאחרונים ניחומים של הכל הם
ואיך תנחמוני למה שתשובותיכם נשאר מעל...

82. Ibid.

...באים כולם אצל הקב"ה אומרים לו רבש"ע בקשנו לנחם

אותה ולא קבלה אמר להם הקב"ה בואו עמי אני ואתם נלך
אצלה ומנחמים לה...

"They all came before the Holy One, blessed be He, and said: Master of the Universe, we sought to comfort her but she would not accept it. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: Come with Me, you and I will go and comfort her".

UMI

CHAPTER II

ELIJAH: PROPHET OF REDEMPTION

In Rabbinic literature, Elijah appears as the prophet par excellence. To be sure, he is neither the first nor the greatest of the prophets. This is the distinction of Moses, the "father of the prophets", whose prophecy, according to the Rabbis, was more perfect than that of other prophets.[1] Nevertheless, it is significant that the Rabbis refer to Moses as Moshe Rabbenu, Moses our teacher. His greatest significance lies in the fact that he was the lawgiver, the man who sought to reshape the Israelite slaves into a new people who would carry God's Torah with them. He is not referred to as Moses the prophet.[2] This epithet was reserved for Elijah. Popular usage often introduced him as Eliahu ha-Navi, Elijah the prophet, meaning the prophet par excellence.[3] An examination of Elijah's personality as presented in Rabbinic literature will explain why he was viewed in this light. This examination will also yield the key to the Rabbinic view of the role of the prophet.

In Biblical literature, the prophets of Israel had two basic functions: to chastise the people and urge them to repentance for their sins, and to console the people and assure them of the certainty of Israel's ultimate vindication and redemption. Both of these facets of prophetic activity appear in Rabbinic comments on the prophets. However, while the chastising element is stressed in Biblical literature, the Rabbis emphasized the consolatory aspect.[4] The Biblical prophets, then, were viewed by the Rabbis primarily as consolers. Elijah, with his role in introducing the messianic future, personified Jewish yearnings for redemption.[5] It is quite understandable, therefore, that he is known as "the prophet".

ELIJAH AND MOSES

Rabbinic tradition closely associated Elijah with Moses. Moses, of course, is the greatest of the prophets. It is he who had the clearest perception of God, and it is he who is God's instrument for the redemption of the Israelites from Egypt. In importance as a prophet, Elijah is second only to Moses. Like Moses, his significance lies in his connection with redemption. He will usher in the second and final redemption of Israel, the redemption that will occur in the time of the Messiah.

Indeed, Moses and Elijah represent the two poles of redemption around which Jewish history revolves. A comment in Exodus Rabba on the phrase "a night of watching" (Ex. 12:42) states that the night of Passover, the night of redemption from Egypt, was established by God as the time for all future redemptions. Thus it is on this night

UMI

that God saved Hezekiah, Hananiah and his companions, and Daniel from the lion's den. And it is on the night of Passover that Elijah and the Messiah are destined to appear. Thus, Jewish history is seen as a progression from the redemption from Egypt (Moses) to the messianic redemption (Elijah).[6]

The most elaborate and detailed association of Elijah and Moses is found in the Pesikta Rabbati, where redemption again is the key:

> You find that two prophets rose up for Israel out of the tribe of Levi; one the first of all the prophets, and the other the last of all the prophets: Moses first and Elijah last and both with a commission from God to release Israel. Moses with his commission redeemed them from Egypt,...and in the time to come, Elijah, with his commission will redeem them. As with Moses, who in the beginning redeemed them out of Egypt, they did not return to slavery again in Egypt; so with Elijah, after he will have redeemed them out of the fourth exile, out of Edom, they will not return and again be enslaved--theirs will be an eternal deliverance.[7]

The Midrash then proceeds to list thirty additional similarities between Moses and Elijah. Among these are: both went up to heaven; both experienced a theophany; both were vehicles through which God delivered His message to the people gathered at a mountain; both were zealous for the Lord; both prayed on behalf of sinning Israel; both were instruments through which the people accepted God's love.

Despite its emphasis on the similarities between Moses and Elijah, this Midrash points out one distinction between the two prophets. In line with the Rabbinic view that Moses was "the father of the prophets", Moses' primacy is clearly established. God invited Moses to stand with Him on Mt. Sinai, (Deut. 5:28). On the other hand, when Elijah was on the mountain of the Lord, God asked him what he was doing there (I Kings 19:9). There is a closeness in the relationship between God and Moses which is lacking in the relationship between God and Elijah.[8]

Some Rabbinic sources portray Elijah and Moses as working together to effect redemption. A statement in Esther Rabba tells us that God decreed the extermination of the Jews because they had participated in Ahasueros' feast. When the pleas of the Torah, the angels, the sun and the moon on behalf of Israel proved useless, Elijah implored the Patriarchs to intercede on Israel's behalf. They, however, claimed that they could do nothing, and that if Israel indeed had violated God's law, their doom was sealed. Elijah finally succeeded in finding a defender for Israel in Moses. He instructed Mordecai to pray on earth for Israel while Moses prayed in heaven.[9]

In this incident, it is the prayer of Moses that saves the Jews. However, Elijah is the agent of redemption as it is he who seeks to arouse action on the part of those to whom God would be inclined most to give heed.

Another source states that Moses will accompany Elijah in proclaiming the final redemption. This is Moses'

UMI

reward for praying on behalf of Israel after the incident of the golden calf.[10]

Although these sources picture Moses and Elijah as working together to save the Jews, a statement in a late Midrash perceived an interesting qualitative difference in the redemptions brought by Moses and Elijah. When the insistent God commissioned the reluctant Moses to go to Pharaoh and demand the release of the Israelites, Moses pleaded with God to send Elijah instead, since it was Elijah who was destined to bring redemption to the Jews. God's answer to Moses was "I have not said, come and I will send thee to Israel", but come and I will send thee to Pharaoh". From this Midrash it would seem that the function of Moses was to save Israel from its foes. Elijah, however, is sent to redeem Israel from itself, i.e. its own sins.[11]

The association between Moses and Elijah in Rabbinic literature is not confined to the theme of redemption. The third century Palestinian Amora, Resh Lakish, saw a similarity in the theophanies experienced by both prophets. A Palestinian tradition maintained that when God gave the Ten Commandments at Sinai the world was totally silent except for the voice of God so that no one could mistake the voice of God for anything else. Resh Lakish declared that God caused a similar silence when Elijah was contesting against the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel. The reason for this silence was that no sound should be mistakenly claimed as Baal's answer to the pleas of his priests. Resh Lakish uses the silence at Mt. Carmel to support the plausibility of the claim made for what happened at Sinai. If such a thing happened at Mt. Carmel, it is all the more certain that it had occurred at Sinai. For Resh Lakish, the incident at Mt. Carmel is clearly secondary to that at Sinai. Nevertheless, the drawing of similarities between the two incidents is symptomatic of the tendency to associate Moses and Elijah.[12]

There is one further significant connection between Moses and Elijah that aroused considerable Rabbinic comment. Neither Moses nor Elijah died in a natural way. The Bible states that Moses died at the command of God and that no one knows his burial place, while Elijah ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot. The unusual aspects of these departures from life, and the implication that they had somehow overcome death, gave further thrust to the association of Moses and Elijah with redemtion.[13]

THE IMMORTALITY OF ELIJAH

A widely held view in Rabbinic sources is that Elijah never died. Rather, he ascended to heaven alive and there waits to play a crucial role in the final messianic redemption. Indeed, his immortality is the key factor in the widespread association of Elijah with redemption, for immortality means victory over death and it is linked with belief in resurrection of the dead (both individual and national) which will be part of the final redemption of Israel.

Belief in Elijah's immortality is expressed in varied ways. A statement in the Talmud says that the combined life spans of seven men cover the entire length of human history: Methuselah saw Adam, Shem saw Methuselah, Jacob saw Shem, Amran saw Jacob, Ahijah the Shilonite saw Amram, and Elijah saw Ahijah. The progression stops with Elijah, and the statement concludes with the assertion that Elijah is still alive.[14] Likewise, in commenting on the phrase "let us make man as one of us (Gen. 3:22)", the fourth century Palestinian amora, Rabbi Berekiah, declared that Adam, like Elijah, did not experience death.[15] Through the intervention of sin, however, Adam became mortal.

Elijah's immortality is also alluded to in the midst of a legal discussion on the laws of mourning. The question at hand is the derivation of the law that prohibits the repair of a rent garment that was torn as an act of mourning by a student for this teacher. When the Talmud suggests that the law may be derived from Elisha who rent his garment in mourning for Elijah, Resh Lakish objects that Elijah did not die, and therefore, it is an inappropriate proof.[16]

Although the assumption of Elijah's immortality is prevalent in Rabbinic sources, there are opinions which oppose this belief. Rabbi Abbahu, the third century Palestinian Amora who was famed for his religious argumentation with heretics and Christians, was confronted once by certain heretics who claimed that Enoch never died.[17] As proof, they employed the Rabbinic exegetical device, gezerah shavah (analogy). Just as Scripture used the verb "to take" when describing Elijah's ascension to heaven, it used the same verb to describe Enoch's departure from earth. Therefore, just as Elijah is immortal, so Enoch too, never died. Rabbi Abbahu answered by shifting the analogy from Elijah to Ezekiel, where in 24:16, the verb "to take" is used in the sense of permanent removal or destruction. Thus Rabbi Abbahu, in countering a challenge that was undoubtedly posed by Christians seeking in Elijah a prefiguration of Jesus' ascension alive to heaven, took the position or was forced to take the position that Elijah, in fact, had died.[18]

In the same vein, and probably for the same reason, Rabbi Jose, while not denying Elijah's immortality, did deny his ascension to heaven. According to this second century Tanna, neither Moses nor Elijah ever reached heaven. Both ascended to a level which was ten handbreadths lower than heaven.[19]

According to the Rabbis, Elijah's ascension had two very important effects on Israel. One affected Israel's internal spiritual development, the other affected the relationship of the Jewish people to the outside world. In the first place, it caused the departure of the holy spirit from Israel. According to a Rabbinic tradition, there were 60,000 prophets in Israel during the days of Elijah; another version of the tradition gives the number as 120,000. With Elijah's departure, the holy spirit ceased. This statement indicates that the prevalence of the spirit of prophecy in Elijah's time was due to the great prophet himself. It is as if his spirit overflowed and filled others; when he disappeared, their spirit left them.[20]

A second event associated with the departure of Elijah is the establishment of Rome as a major power. Rome, for the Rabbis, is the great antagonist of Israel and her establishment as a world power is, of course, a national tragedy for the Jews.[21] The Palestinian Talmud, in connecting Elijah's departure with the ascendancy to power of Rome, sees a relation between certain events in the history of Israel and events in the outside world. Thus, on the day that Solomon married the daughter of Pharoah Necho, the angel Michael descended from heaven and stuck a pole in the sea. Mud came up around the pole, and the place where this occurred became the site of Rome. Further, on the day that Jeroboam made the calf of gold, Romulus and

Remus built two huts in Rome. The climactic disaster--the crowning of the first king of Rome--happened on the day of Elijah's departure.[22]

The meaning of the first two parallel events in the series is clear. There is a direct cause and effect relation between the moral failings (specifically, those involving idolatrous practice or marriage to idolators) of Israel and their sufferings at the hands of the idolatrous Gentiles. The third parallel event, that connecting Elijah's departure with the crowning of the first Roman king, is more difficult to explain. Here, there is no idolatry-related sin to explain the disaster. The rise of Rome as a world power is attributed solely to the disappearance of Elijah. However, Elijah's role as defender of Israel is so great and his association with Israel's redemption is so all-pervasive, that it is quite appropriate that an event that was to lead to some of the darkest hours in Israel's history should be related to the disappearnce of that prophet.

ELIJAH AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

While his own immortality made Elijah the symbol of redemption, the Biblical account of his ability to revive others from death gave added depth to this symbol. It is most striking, however, that Rabbinic comments on Elijah's revival of the son of the woman from Zarephath

UMI

minimize the prophet's role in bringing the boy back to life.[23] These comments deny Elijah any intrinsic God-like power to revive the dead. In some, the boy's resurrection is due entirely to factors external to Elijah. He is only the instrument through whom God works the miracle.

A comment in Canticles Rabba removes from Elijah all credit for the power to revive the dead. The son of the woman of Zarephath was resurrected, according to this source, because his mother sustained Elijah with food during his time of need. The son's resurrection was the mother's reward for her kindness. An alternate view maintains that the son's revival was due to the warm welcome his mother accorded to Elijah.[24] Clearly, the purpose of these didactic statements is not to prove that Elijah was endowed with the power to revive the dead. Rather, it is to demonstrate the efficacy of the mitzvah of welcoming and caring for travelers.

More striking is the account in a later Midrash, Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, where God revives the boy in order to save Elijah's good name. According to this source, the woman accused Elijah of causing her son's death: "You came to me for coition and you will bring my sin to remembrance against me, and my son is dead". Elijah, angered and disturbed at the accusation, is concerned for his own reputation as well as for the dead boy. He prays to God, the boy is revived, and Elijah's good name is restored.[25]

Another late source commenting on Elijah's resurrecting the dead heaps praise on the prophet. However, it is significant that Elijah is not praised for reviving the dead. Rather, this source seeks to determine why God chose Elijah as His instrument to resurrect the dead:

> Why did Elijah merit that the dead should be resurrected through him? Because he performed the will of Him Who spoke and the world came into being, the Holy One, Blessed be He, and he was concerned with the honor of God and of Israel. Every day he thought to destroy the enemies of Israel. In every generation, when Elijah found righteous people, he would embrace them and hug and kiss them and bless and exalt and praise and sanctify the name of God.[26]

It was Elijah's concern for the honor of God and Israel which made him worthy of reviving the dead.

It is significant that each of the above-mentioned three sources derives Elijah's power of resurrection from a source external to the prophet; none attributes this power to him as an inherent gift. The Rabbis clearly understood the danger in attaching the power of resurrecting the dead to a human instrumentality. It tended to strengthen the Christian claim concerning Jesus' resurrection. The Scriptural allusions to resurrections effected by Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel certainly could not be ignored. Nor indeed would the Rabbis want to ignore them, for the element of consolation carried in them was great. However, the Rabbis clearly sought to counter any thought that those humans who effected resurrection were anything but humans.

Thus the Tanhuma states that:

> The Holy One, Blessed be He, said [to Hiram of Tyre]: I resurrect the dead and Elijah resurrected the dead, yet he did not say, I am a god![27]

This Midrash goes on to show how Elijah performed a number of God-like acts, and yet never claimed to be a god. The miracles mentioned are causing rain to fall, preventing rain from falling, and causing fire and brimstone to descend on earth. More striking is the comparison of Daniel 7:9 where God's throne is described as fiery flames with Elijah's ascension in the fiery chariot and the comparison of Nahum 1:3 where God is associated with the storm and whirlwind with Elijah who ascended in a storm. Here, the association of Elijah with God is direct and immediate. Yet, the point of this Midrash is that despite possessing certain similarities to things divine, no claim of divinity was ever made for or by Elijah.

While denying Elijah any intrinsic power of resurrection, his resurrection of the dead son of the woman of Zarephath strengthened the prophet's association with redemption. Indeed, Elijah's resurrection of the dead boy along with the resurrections effected by Elisha and Ezekiel were viewed as foretastes of the world to come. A statement in Leviticus Rabba informs us that:

> Rabbi Aha in the name of Rabbi Simeon ben Halafta said; everything that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is destined to do in the next world, He has already shown to them in this

> world. He revives the dead--He has already revived the dead through Elijah, Elisha, and Ezekiel.[28]

ELIJAH AND THE MESSIANIC AGE

The association of Elijah with the messianic redemption is apparently very old, for the prophet Malachi alludes to it: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming Of the great and terrible day of the Lord; And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children And the heart of the children to their fathers...."[29] It is these verses along with the remarkable manner of Elijah's departure from this world that underlie the Rabbinic association of Elijah with things messianic.

The _Mishnah_ records a difference of views in Rabbinic interpretation of Malachi 3:24. Rabbi Joshua, citing Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai as his authority, quotes an ancient tradition[30] that the reconciliation between fathers and sons to be brought about by Elijah refers to the restoration of family purity in Israel. R. Simon, viewing verse 22, "Remember ye the Law of Moses My servant...", as the antecedent of verse 24, states that Elijah will reconcile differences among the Sages in the interpretation of the law. The Sages, however, explained verse 24 in a more general and universal way. For them, the reconciliation of fathers and children meant the establishment of peace throughout the world.[31] Thus, the Rabbis saw the bringing about of reconciliation as the basic function of Elijah in the drama of the messianic age as it was to unfold.

Indeed, Elijah's reconciling role is a necessary prerequisite for the coming of the Messiah:

> R. Judah said: Israel will not be redeemed unless it repents; and Israel will repent only when subjected to trouble, oppression, and loss of livelihood. And Israel will not engage in great repentance until Elijah comes, as it says 'Behold I send...'.[32]

Thus, the reconciliation that Elijah will effect will also be one between God and Israel, and only when this reconciliation comes to pass will the messiah come.

Another Rabbinic source projects Elijah's reconciling role into the hereafter. The following is a comment on Eccleslastes 4:1:

> But I returned and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun--R. Judah says: It refers to the children who are buried early in life through the sins of their fathers in this world. In the Hereafter they will range themselves with the band of the righteous, while their fathers will be ranged with the band of the wicked. They will speak before Him: 'Lord of the universe, did we not die early only because of the sins of our fathers? Let our fathers come over to us through our merits'. He replies to them, 'Your fathers sinned also after your death, and their wrongdoings accuse them'. R. Judah b.R. Ilai said in the name of R. Joshua b. Levi: at that time Elijah (may he be remembered for good) will be there to suggest a defence. He will say to the children: 'Speak before Him, Lord of the universe, which Attribute of Thine predominates, that of Grace or Punishment? Surely the Attribute of Grace is great and that of Punishment small, yet we died through the sins of our fathers. If then the Attribute of Grace exceeds the other, how much more should our fathers come over to us! ' Therefore he says to them, 'Well, have you pleaded; let them come over to you'.[33]

Aside from bringing about the reconciliation, Elijah has other functions in introducing the messianic era. Three days before the Redemption Elijah will proclaim that peace is coming to the world; on the second day he will announce that goodness is coming, and on the day before he will declare that salvation is coming.[34] Thus, Elijah will not only be instrumental in effecting the necessary conditions for the coming of the messiah, but he will also be the herald of the Redemption. Furthermore, according to another tradition, the prophet will annoint the Messiah from the jar of oil dating back to the days when Israel was in the wilderness, and which had disappeared with the destruction of the First Temple.[35]

In addition to these roles, some Rabbinic sources also portray Elijah as working together with the Messiah. The four craftsmen who will overthrow the enemies of Judah (Zech. 2:3) are identified as: the Davidic Messiah, the Ephramitic Messiah, Elijah, and the Righteous Priest. Elijah and the Messiah are also mentioned together among the eight princes who will break the power of Assyria.[36] Both will appear together on the first night of Passover, the time designated for Israel's redemption.[37] Together, the messiah and Elijah are engaged in recording the good deeds of men, an activity that had been carried out previously by the prophets.[38] The two of them will be instrumental in returning the power of prophecy to Israel in the future.[39] Thus, in the popular imagination the association of Elijah with the Messiah was very close. Both were essential characters in achieving Israel's redemption, and in speaking of that redemption the sources often mention them acting together. This has led to some confusion wherein Elijah and the Messiah have been equated or used interchangeably. However, the distinctive role of Elijah as reconciler and herald and the distinctive role of the Messiah as the agent who will actually bring redemption are clear.[40]

ELIJAH'S RELATIONS TO MAN

Although Elijah was "hidden away", he did not remain hidden from the affairs of men. His activity during the interim period between his disappearance and his reappearance to usher in the Messianic Age falls into two categories--the activity in which he is invisible to men, and the activity in which he has direct communication with men.

The Rabbis assigned a number of tasks to Elijah in heaven while he awaits his final task. According to one source, he chronicles the events of man.[41] Other sources picture Elijah and God engaged in joint activity. One joins the prophet with the Messiah and God in recording the good deeds which men perform.[42] Another tells how Elijah binds and God lashes men who enter into improper marriages.[43]

UMI

In addition to these heavenly tasks, Elijah appears to and converses with Rabbis and laymen. His frequent appearances occur under a variety of circumstances, and in them, the prophet often assumes different disguises. Although the stories that relate these encounters vary greatly in their content and circumstances, they all share a common underlying motif. The immortal Elijah represents victory over death. He is, therefore, the symbol of the future redemption of Israel. As such, his contact with men in their daily lives is a constant reminder to the Jewish people of the future redemption. Hence, the main purpose of his presence in human affairs is to serve as an ongoing source of hope and consolation.

Elijah as Reconciler

Just as Elijah is to bring about reconciliation between people at the end of days, he also strives to mend relations between quarreling parties in the here and now. An *Aggadah* tells of an incident which caused bad feeling between Rabbi Judah the Patriarch and his friend and colleague, Rabbi Hiyyah. As proof of his humility, the Patriarch once remarked that he was prepared to do whatever any man asked of him except give up his office. However, were Rav Huna the Exilarch to come to Palestine, Rabbi Judah declared that he would yield his office to him, as the Exilarch was descended from the tribe of Judah--the tribe to which legitimate authority was entrusted.

Rabbi Hiyyah thereupon announced that Rav Huna had arrived and was waiting outside of the academy. As the Patriarch's face whitened, Rabbi Hiyyah reassured him by explaining that he meant that Rav Huna's coffin was outside. For this insolence, Rabbi Judah placed Rabbi Hiyyah under the ban for thirty days. One day, in the guise of Rabbi Hiyyah, Elijah appeared before the Patriarch and cured a toothache that had been afflicting him for thirteen years.[44] After the thirty days' ban had lapsed, Rabbi Hiyyah rejoined Rabbi Judah's academy and asked the Patriarch about his toothache. To Rabbi Hiyyah's surprise, Rabbi Judah told him that from the time he had placed his hand on the sore tooth, it had been restored to health. Rabbi Hiyyah, of course, denied having placed his hand on the sore tooth, and Rabbi Judah then realized that it was Elijah in the guise of Rabbi Hiyyah who had effected the cure. From that time on, the two Rabbis were reconciled and Rabbi Judah heaped honors upon his junior colleague.[45]

Elijah's efforts to restore peaceful relations among people were not confined to the scholars. He once helped to reconcile a cynical husband and his studious wife. The wife used to attend Rabbi Meir's lectures on Sabbath evenings, and upon returning home late one Sabbath evening, found an angry husband who forbade her to enter the house until she spat in the face of Rabbi

Meir. Confronted with this ultimatum, the woman left her home. Elijah then appeared to Rabbi Meir, rebuked him for having caused a family quarrel and informed him of the situation. When the woman reappeared in the academy, Rabbi Meir pretended to have a sore eye and asked if anyone knew a charm that could cure it. The woman stepped forward and spat in the Rabbi's face. Rabbi Meir thereupon told the woman to inform her husband that she had complied with his wishes. Thus, through the intervention of Elijah, a reconciliation was effected.[46]

Elijah and the Gentile Government

One of Elijah's special roles was to save Jewish leaders who aroused the ire of the Roman government. The *Talmud* relates that when the teacher Nahum of Gimzo, had embarked on a political mission to Rome, he was robbed of the jewels that he was bringing as a gift to the emperor. The thieves had replaced the jewels with dirt. When the box containing the dirt was opened at Rome, Nahum was condemned to death for mocking the emperor. Elijah then assumed the appearance of a court official and suggested that the dirt had powers that would prove more effective in warfare than swords or arrows. The dirt was tried in war and brought victory to the Romans thus saving Nahum.[47]

On another occasion, Elijah rescued Rabbi Meir who was pursued by the Romans for having obtained his sister-in-law's release from a brothel through bribery. The rabbi resorted to bribery out of fear of what would befall his wife's sister at the hands of the Romans. In this incident, Elijah takes the appearance of a harlot and embraces Rabbi Meir. The Romans give up the chase believing that Rabbi Meir would never be found in the company of such a woman.[48]

Aside from saving certain Jews from a cruel fate at the hands of the Romans, Elijah also discouraged Jewish collaboration with the Roman administration. Thus, he severely chastised Rabbi Ishmael ben Jose for becoming an informer to the state telling him to follow the example of his father who had been forced to flee from Palestine for defying the Roman government.[49]

These incidents, which involve Elijah and which present Rome and the Roman administration in Palestine in a negative light, serve two purposes. In the first place, they underline Elijah's role as defender and guardian of persecuted Israel. They also serve as a microcosm of the future redemption of Israel from the hands of her oppressors. Each incident in which the Roman government is outwitted or its designs thwarted represents a victory for Israel. And although Israel still lies under the heel of Roman domination, these small victories brought about through the agency of Elijah, serve as signposts pointing toward the future redemption that Elijah will inaugurate.

In light of this association of Elijah with the redemption from Roman rule, it is neither surprising nor accidental that it was Elijah who informed Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai of the death of the emperor Hadrian, thereby making it possible for the rabbi to emerge from the cave in which he had been hiding from the Romans for thirteen years.[50] For the Rabbis, Hadrian was the worst of the Roman emperors, for it was he who outlawed the practice of Judaism on pain of death in the wake of the Bar Kochba revolt.[51] He is, in a sense, the evil of Rome personified, and it is altogether fitting that his death should be announced by Elijah.

The amassing of wealth, a facet of imperial administration in which the Romans excelled, was a source of consternation to the Jews of Palestine. Not only was the Jewish colonial population subject to a heavy tax burden which impoverished the country, but from a religio-theological point of view it was galling to see the cruel and idolatrous Romans prospering while God's chosen people suffered in poverty and subjugation.[52] The early third century Palestinian Amora, Rabbi Hanina of Sepphoris, was able to comfort his countrymen by assuring them that the Roman emperor was amassing treasures, not for himself, but for the Messiah. The fourth century Palestinian Amora, Rabbi Levi, added that Elijah had appeared to a Roman emperor who had squandered his treasures. He criticised the emperor for wasting the money and remained with him until the treasures had been replaced.[53]

The purport of these two statements is consolatory. The treasures of Rome will ultimately end up in the hands of the Messiah, and by implication, Israel. Elijah is the guardian of the treasury who makes sure that Israel will not be cheated out of anything due her.

Rabbinic sources also employ Elijah to assure the Jewish people that God will not tolerate for long the rule of immoral Rome. It is related that Elijah met the second century Tanna, Rabbi Nehorai, and in the course of conversation, asked him why earthquakes occur. The rabbi answered that the cause of these calamities was Israel's laxity in fulfilling the commandment of tithes. Elijah, however, corrected Rabbi Nehorai and told him that earthquakes were caused by God's anger when He contemplated the secure and peaceful existence of Roman theatres and circuses while the Temple lay in ruins.[54]

Elijah as Guardian of the Poor

As the comforter of Israel, Elijah sought to ease the burdens of poverty on his people. He assured Bar Hé Hé that poverty had a salutary effect since of all the favors God might have bestowed on Israel, He chose poverty as the most worthy.[55]

Aside from this one consolatory statement which glorifies poverty, the other sources involving Elijah in situations of poverty indicate that poverty is a situation to be assiduously avoided.[56] Poverty inhibits study of the Torah. The Talmud tells us that Rabbah bar Abbuha could devote no time to study because of his poverty. Elijah led Rabbah bar Abbuha into Paradise where he instructed him to gather some leaves. When a heavenly voice warned him that by taking the leaves from Paradise he would be receiving his heavenly reward in this world, Rabbah cast away the leaves. Nevertheless, upon returning to earth, he was able to sell the garment for a large sum of money since it still retained the fragrance of the leaves of Paradise.[57]

On another occasion, poverty had near fatal consequences for Rabbi Kahana, who earned his livelihood by selling baskets to women. This occupation had led that scholar into falling prey to the advances of a woman of high standing. Rather than commit an immoral act, R. Kahana threw himself from a roof only to be saved by Elijah who provided the rabbi with money so that he could leave his perilous occupation.[58]

Elijah did not always rescue people from the clutches of poverty. Sometimes he merely comforted and encouraged those in need. The classic example of this is the story of the extreme poverty of R. Akiba and his wife, Rachel. Elijah appeared in the guise of a beggar to the poor couple one winter night and pleaded for some straw

UMI

so that his wife who was about to give birth would have a place to rest. This gave R. Akiba the opportunity to comfort his wife by pointing out that poor as they were, there were others who had even less than they possessed.[59]

Elijah as Teacher

As the guardian and comforter of Israel, Elijah often appears in the role of teacher of moral lessons and practical wisdom. The subject matter of these lessons varied greatly.

Moral wisdom.

The *Talmud* informs us that Elijah used to converse with a certain pious man until that man built a watchman's lodge at the entrance to a courtyard with the result that the cries of the poor could no longer be heard within the courtyard.[60] For the truly pious, a measure of extra sensitivity to the needs of his fellow man is required.

Elijah was concerned with domestic tranquility. Thus, he answered R. Jose's query on how woman helped man (Genesis 2:18) by explaining that the husband-wife relationship was a partnership--the man providing the necessities of life, and the woman handling the household responsibilities.[61]

Sexual offenses were a special target of Elijah's wrath. He declared that a certain learned man who had died in middle age deserved his fate because he had slept

UMI

with his wife during the seven days following her menstrual period even though he did not have sexual intercourse with her.[62] Indeed, it was Israel's failure to control its sexual urge, even on Yom Kippur, that caused the Messiah to delay his coming.[63]

Study of Torah was, of course, a prime concern of Elijah. He encouraged those whom he deemed capable of study to study. Thus, he diverted R. Eleazer bar Simeon from his occupation of pressing men and animals into forced labor and taught him the Siphra for thirteen years. Subsequently, R. Eleazer became an expert in Siphra.[64] Similarly, according to one tradition, Elijah is credited with initiating the study career of the first century Tanna, R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus.[65]

Another concern of Elijah's was to teach the virtue of humility to the haughty. Rabbi Eleazar bar Simeon took great pride in his knowledge of the Torah. One day, a certain ugly man (Elijah) greeted the rabbi on the road. Instead of returning the greeting, R. Eleazar commented on the man's ugliness. When the man rebuked him by telling him to go and complain to the Craftsman who had fashioned him about the poor quality of His handiwork, R. Eleazar realized his error and sought the man's forgiveness.[66]

That virtue may reside in the humble is also the lesson of another striking story told of Elijah. One day Elijah and R. Berokah were in a market-place. The rabbi asked Elijah if anyone present there was worthy of the next world. The prophet singled out a man whose external appearance marked him as a pagan. Under questioning from R. Berokah, the man explained that he was a jailer and that he dressed like a pagan so that no one would suspect he was a Jew. In this way he was able to make sure that male and female prisoners were kept separate and he could also see to it that no harm came to Jewish women prisoners upon whom the pagans might have immoral designs. His disguise also made it possible for him to come and go among the pagan officials. This allowed him to warn the rabbis of any evil decrees being concocted against the Jews. The rabbis could then pray to have the decrees annulled. Meanwhile, two clowns appeared in the market-place. These, too, delcared Elijah, were worthy of the next world for their occupation was to bring joy to the downcast.[67]

Practical wisdom. In addition to the moral lessons that he taught, Elijah also provided his confidants with practical wisdom ranging from medicinal cures to observations on human nature. When R. Shimei swallowed a snake, it was Elijah who came up with the cure.[68] In a similar vein, the prophet explained to R. Nehorai that God created the crawling creatures so that they could be used as cures for certain illnesses.[69]

Sounding like a teacher of wisdom influenced by Greek thought, Elijah taught that moderation was a key to successful living. He advised Rab Judah, brother of R. Sala the Pious, against falling into a passion and against excessive drinking as these would lead to sin. He added a note of piety to R. Judah by suggesting that he seek God's counsel before embarking on a journey.[70] Elijah gave other advice to R. Nathan on controlling anger. He told this rabbi never to fill his stomach with food and drink so that were he to become enraged, he could vent his anger by eating and drinking.[71]

Revealer of secrets. As one who partook of both the heavenly world and the earthly world, and as guardian and comforter of Israel, Elijah occasionally informed the rabbis of certain heavenly affairs and secrets. In a number of instances, Elijah revealed what God generally does in heaven or what He was doing at a specific time. These stories portray God as being occupied with halachic matters.

The *Talmud* relates that Rabbah bar Shila met Elijah and asked him what God was doing. Elijah replied that God was reciting legal traditions in the names of the various rabbis who authored those traditions. God, however, did not recite the legal traditions of Rabbi Meir as that scholar had been the disciple of a teacher who had become a heretic.[72] Rabbah bar Shila defended R. Meir by comparing him to a man who found a pomegranate, ate the inner fruit and discarded the outer shell. God apparently accepted the comparison, for Elijah subsequently informed Rabbah bar Shila that as a result of his pleading, God now recited the legal traditions of R. Meir along with those of the other scholars.[73]

A somewhat similar incident is recorded in which Rabbi Abiathar asked Elijah what God was doing. Elijah's answer was that God was occupied in studying the various rabbinic opinions as to why the Levite had ill-treated his concubine and caused her to leave him (Judges, 19).[74] One lesson of both of these stories is that they promote the study of Torah as the highest goal, as God Himself is preoccupied with it. It is also clear that a further intent of these stories is to legitimize the authority of the Rabbis, since it is their traditions that God is studying.

This latter point is driven home in a startling way in one of the most remarkable stories recorded in the Talmud. In this episode, Elijah revealed God's reaction to a dispute in the academy on the question of the ability of a certain type of oven to contract ritual impurity. This controversy pitted Rabbi Eliezer against his colleagues led by Rabbi Joshua. R. Eliezer called for miracles to occur to prove that his view was correct. When, at R. Eliezer's behest miracles did occur, the rabbis rejected them as not constituting valid proof of the correctness of a particular view in halachic discussions. R. Joshua articulated this feeling by proclaiming that decisions in

UMI

halachic matters were not the province of heaven. The story concludes with Rabbi Nathan asking Elijah what God did when He witnessed this dispute. The prophet's reply indicated that God derived great pleasure from the incident, for, Elijah revealed, God smiled and declared that His children (i.e. the rabbis) had prevailed over Him.[75]

Here, unlike the incidents with Rabbah bar Shila and R. Abiathar, God is not portrayed as studying the traditions of the rabbis and thus enhancing their validity. Rather, God Himself submits to the authority of the earthly court in halachic matters. Once God had given His Torah to Israel, it became the exclusive right of Israel's sages to interpret it. Not even God could interfere with this process of interpretation.

Not all of Elijah's revelations of heavenly activity concerned God's relations to the rabbis and halachic matters. One time he acquiesced to the request of a rabbi to show him the departed scholars as they ascended to the heavenly academy.[76] On another occasion it seemed that Elijah overstepped himself in his solicitude for Israel, and was severly punished by the heavenly court for revealing too much of heaven's secrets to man and for uncovering the key to redemption:

> Elijah used to frequent Rabbi's academy. One day--it was New Moon--he was waiting for him, but he failed to come. He said to him [the next day]: Why did you delay? He replied: [I had to wait] until I awoke Abraham, washed his hands, and prayed and I put him to rest

UMI

> again; likewise to Isaac and Jacob. But why not awake them together? I feared that they would wax strong in prayer and bring the Messiah before his time. And is their like to be found in this world? he asked. There is R. Hiyya and his sons, he replied. Thereupon Rabbi proclaimed a fast, and R. Hiyya and his sons were bidden to descend [to the reading desk]. As he [R. Hiyya] exclaimed, He causes the wind to blow, a wind blew; he proceeded, He causes the rain to descend, and the rain descended. When he was about to say, He quickens the dead, the universe trembled, (and) in Heaven it was asked, Who has revealed our secret to the world? Elijah, they replied. Elijah was therefore brought and smitten with sixty flaming lashes, so he went, disguised himself as a fiery bear, entered amongst and scattered them.[77]

A number of the stories in which Elijah reveals heavenly matters to man contain messages of comfort and hope for Israel. Thus, Elijah informed Rabbi Jose that God mourned for Israel's destruction three times daily.[78] He specified the time of redemption to Rab Judah brother of R. Sala the Pious by stating that the world would exist for eighty-five jubilees, at the end of which time the Messiah would appear.[79] According to still another source, Elijah revealed that God was grieved over the destruction of His temple.[80]

Elijah and Rabbi Joshua ben Levi

While Elijah appeared to and conversed with many rabbis, he seems to have enjoyed an especially warm relationship with the third century Palestinian teacher, Rabbi Joshua b. Levi. Elijah studied with R. Joshua, joining him on one occasion in consulting the deceased

Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai when the prophet wished to ascertain whether the tradition that they were studying had been authored by that rabbi.[81]

On a number of occasions Elijah revealed secret matters to his friend, R. Joshua. These revelatory passages, like some of those noted above, were basically consolatory. Thus, the prophet showed R. Joshua the Kadkudaya stone (Isa. 54:11ff) from which Jerusalem would be rebuilt.[82] Another time, the prophet informed R. Joshua of the whereabouts of the Messiah. He could be found, according to Elijah, at the gate of Rome among the lepers. The rabbi thereupon went to Rome, found the Messiah, and asked him when he would reveal himself to the world. The Messiah's answer was brief--"today." Perplexed and disappointed, R. Joshua returned home and complained to Elijah that the Messiah had lied since he had not yet revealed himself. Elijah then explained that when the Messiah said "today," he was alluding to the verse in Psalms (95:7): "Today, if you listen to His voice." The Messiah was ready to reveal himself today or any day that man would heed the voice of God.[83]

Despite the closeness of their relationship, there were times when the friendship between Elijah and R. Joshua came under strain. Elijah became so incensed with R. Joshua on two occasions that he ceased contact with the rabbi. In both cases, Elijah used his anger to teach R.

Joshua a level of conduct above and beyond that which is acceptable from the common man. Greater sensitivity and a higher code of ethics is expected from religious leaders. Once when a lion devoured a man in the vicinity of the town where R. Joshua lived, Elijah suspended his visits to the rabbi. Elijah subsequently explained that he held R. Joshua partially to blame for the man's death, for the man was a sinner and had R. Joshua prayed for him, the disaster might have been averted.[84]

Another time, Elijah sharply rebuked R. Joshua for conduct unbecoming a pious man. A certain man, fleeing from the Roman authorities, came to R. Joshua's city of Lydda. R. Joshua convinced the man to give himself over to the authorities lest the entire community suffer the consequences of governmental wrath. Although R. Joshua acted in accordance with the law, Elijah did not appear to the rabbi for thirty days. When he finally reappeared, he explained that such conduct, though legal, was unworthy of a truly pious man who enjoyed the confidence of Elijah.[85]

These angry intervals notwithstanding, the relationship between Elijah and R. Joshua was warm and close. So close in fact that Rabbinic legendary lore wove some of the elements of Elijah's death into the stories of the death of R. Joshua. Like Elijah, R. Joshua did not die in a normal way. He did not "taste death," but entered alive into Paradise. There, Elijah gave the singular honor

UMI

to R. Joshua of walking before him and proclaiming, "Make way for the son of Levi, make way for the son of Levi."[86]

ELIJAH AS CHASTISER

Although Rabbinic sources portray Elijah as the defender and comforter of Israel, there are statements that picture him in a harsher light. Rabbinic comments on two Biblical incidents illustrate this other aspect of the prophet's character. The first incident is Elijah's proclamation of a drought (I Kings 17:1) during the reign of Ahab. Significantly, it is Elijah, not God, who commanded that the land be smitten with drought for three years. The prophet was incensed over Ahab's blasphemous mockery of God, and swore that no rain would fall except by his word.[87] When, after prolonged drought, God sought to bring relief, Elijah refused to be swayed from his oath. It was only by killing the son of the woman of Zarephath and causing Elijah to be in need of the dew that causes resurrection that God was able to force Elijah to bring an end to the drought.[88] God, touched by the plight of the drought-stricken people, was willing to forgive and bring relief. Elijah, however, remained adamant and stern even when God was merciful and the prophet had to be manipulated into yielding.

A similar incident occurred when Elijah sought refuge in Mt. Horeb. In his flight from the vengeful Jezebel after the slaughter of the four hundred prophets of Baal, Elijah proclaimed to God: "I have been very zealous for God, the Lord of Hosts, for the Children of Israel have abandoned Your covenant, they have destroyed Your altars, and they have killed Your prophets by the sword, and I alone remain and they desire to kill me. (I Kings 19:14)". A rabbinic comment on this verse provides the following dialogue between God and Elijah:

> For the Children of Israel have abandoned Your covenant--the Holy One Blessed be He, said: My covenant, perhaps [you think] it is your covenant?! They have destroyed Your altars'--He said to him: My altars, perhaps [you think] it is your altars?! 'And they have killed Your prophets by the sword'--He said to him: they are My prophets, how does it concern you?[89]

In this comment we see the wrath of the Rabbis aroused against Elijah for his attack upon the infidelity of Israel. The Rabbis do not contest the content of Elijah's complaint. They object to his speaking ill of Israel, regardless of the truth of his words. The prophet should either have chastised Israel with the view to correcting them or he should have defended Israel against God's displeasure. To proclaim Israel's sin before God, or to speak ill of Israel is not the prophet's function. In this source, God Himself teaches this lesson to the prophet.

It was this very criticism of Israel which,

UMI

according to the Rabbis, brought punishment upon Elijah. His complaint against Israel contained in his protestation--"I have been very zealous for the Lord...(I Kings 19:14)"--dishonors Israel; God's response to Elijah--"Go return to the desert of Damascus...and annoint Elisha ben Shaphat...as a prophet in your stead (*Ibid.*, 19:15)"--is viewed as a rebuke to the prophet.[90] God designated Elisha as Elijah's successor because Elijah was no longer worthy to serve as a prophet. By his slander of Israel, he had forfeited his calling.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

1. TB Yebamoth, 49b.

כל הנביאים נסתכלו באספקלריא שאינה מאירה משה רבינו
נסתכל באספקלריה המאירה.

"All the prophets saw God as one who looks into a dim glass; Moses saw God as one who looks through a clear glass."

2. For a contrary view, cf. Ahad Haam's essay "Moses" in which the author portrays Moses as the prophet par excellence. Selected Essays of Ahad Ha-Am, trans. Leon Simon (Cleveland: 1962), pp. 125-138.

3. Louis Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews, (Philadelphia: 1946-1961), VI, p. 316, footnote 1.

4. Cf. above, pp. 23-30.

5. Cf. below, pp. 66-69.

6. Exodus R., 18:12.

מה ראה לומר ליל שמורים שבו עשה גדלה לצדיקים כשם שעשה
לישראל במצרים ובו הציל לחזקיהו ובו הציל לחנניה וחבריו
ובו הציל לדניאל מגב האריות ובו משיח ואליהו מתגדלין.

The New Testament also drew on the tradition of Moses and Elijah as redeemers. They appear together with Jesus at the time of the Transfiguration (Matthew, 17:3; Mark, 9:4; Luke, 9:30). Asher Finkel has shown that a number of New Testament details of Jesus and incidents in his life are based on Old Testament parallels with Moses and Elijah. Cf. Asher Finkel,

UMI

The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth (Leiden: 1964), pp. 98-103. For more on the significance of Moses and Elijah in New Testament eschatology, see *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: 1968), pp. 771-772.

7. *PR*, 4, p. 13a.

אתה מוצא שני נביאים עמדו להם לישראל משבטו של לוי משה
ראשון ואליהו אחרון [ושניהם גואלים את] ישראל כשליחות
משה גאלם ממצרים כשליחות..ואליהו גאלם לעתיד לבא כשליחות
משה שגאלם ממצרים תחלה עוד לא חזרו ונשתעבדו במצרים...
ואליהו כשיגאלם אותם מן הרביעית מאדום...[היא]תשועת עולם.

8. *Ibid.*, 13a-b.

9. *Esther R.*, 7:18.

באותה שעה רץ אליהו ז"ל בבהלה אצל אבות העולם ואצל משה
בן עמרם ואמר להם עד מתי אבות העולם רדומים בשינה ואי
אתם משגיחים על הצרה שבניהם שרוין בה כי מלאכי השרת וחמה
ולבנה וכוכבים ומזלות ושמים וארץ וכל צבא המרום בוכים
במרר ואתם עומדים מנגד ואינכם משגיחים אמרו לו מפני מה
אמר להם מפני שנהנו ישראל מסעודתו של אחשורוש ובעבור
זאת נגזרה עליהם גזרה לכלותם...אמרו לו...אם הם עברו
על דת הקב"ה ונחתמה גזרתם מה אנו יכולים לעשות חזר
אליהו ואמר לו למשה אי רועה נאמן כמה פעמים עמדת על
הפרץ לישראל...אמר לו משה כלום יש אדם כשר באותו הדור
אמר לו יש ושמו מרדכי אמר לו לך והודיעו כדי שיעמוד הוא
משם בתפלה ואני מכאן ונבקש רחמים עליהם לפני הקב"ה...

10. *Deuteronomy R.*, 3:16.

א"ל הקב"ה משה חייך כשם שנתת את נפשך עליהן בעולם הזה
כך לעולם הבא כשאביא להם את אליהו הנביא שניכם באין כאחת.

11. *PRE*, 40.

אמר לו לך ואשלחך אל פרעה אמר לפניו רבון כל העולמים
שלח נא ביד תשלח ביד אותו האיש שאתה עתיד לשלוח א"ל
לא אמרתי לך לך ואשלחך אל ישראל אלא לך ואשלחך אל
פרעה ולאותו האיש שאתה אומר אני שולח לע"ל אל ישראל.

12. *Exodus R.*, 29 end.

אמר ר׳ אבהו בשם ר׳ יוחנן כשנתן הקב"ה את התורה צפור לא
צוח עוף לא פרח שור לא געה אופנים לא עפו שרפים לא
אמרו קדוש קדוש הים לא נזדעזע הבריות לא דברו אלא
העולם שותק ומחריש ויצא הקול...אמר ר׳ שמעון בן לקיש
...אלא כשאדם קורא לחברו יש לקולו בת קול והקול שהיה
יוצא מפי הקב"ה לא היה לקולו בת קול ואם תמה אתה על
זו הרי אליהו כשבא לכרמל כנס כל הכומרים...מה עשה
הקב"ה הרמים כל העולם והשתיק העליונים והתחתונים
והיה העולם תהו ובהו כאלו לא היה בריה בעולם...
שאם ידבר הם אומרים הבעל עננו על אחת כמה וכמה
כשדבר הקב"ה על הר סיני השתיק כל העולם כדי שידעו
הבריות שאין חוץ ממנו...

13. Deut. 34:5-6 and II Kings 2:11.

Elijah's unusual departure from this world was the subject of considerable comment in Rabbinic literature. Cf. L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, VI, pp. 322-323, n. 32.

14. *TB Baba Bathra*, 121b.

מתושלח ראה אדם שם ראה מתושלח יעקב ראה את שם עמרם
ראה את יעקב אחיה השילוני ראה את עמרם אליהו ראה את
אחיה השילוני ועדיין קים.

For a slightly different version, see *ARN(B)*, 38 end. Here the order of names is somewhat different, and it states that Elijah will remain alive until the coming of the Messiah.

15. Genesis R., 21:5.

ר׳ ברכיה בשם ר׳ חנינא אמר כאליהו מה זה לא טעם מיתה אף
זה לא היה ראוי לטעם טעם מיתה.

16. TB Moed Katan, 26a.

ולא מתאחין מנלן דכתיב ויחזק בבגדיו ויקרעם לשנים קרעים
ממשמע שנאמר ויקרעם איני יודע שלשנים אלא מלמד שקרועים
ועומדים לשנים לעולם אמר ליה ריש לקיש...אליהו חי הוא...

17. For the Rabbinic treatment of Enoch, and especially the question of his death, see "Enoch", Encyclopedia Judaica, VI, p. 794.

18. Genesis R., 25:1

אפיקורסים שאלו לר׳ אבהו אמרו לו אין אנו מוצאין מיתה
לחנוך אמר להם למה אמרו לו נאמרה כאן לקיחה ונאמר להלן
כי היום ה׳ לקח את אדניך מעל ראשך אמר להם אם ללקיחה
אתם דורשים נאמר כאן לקיחה ונאמר להלן הנני לקח ממך
את מחמד עיניך במגפה.

The Theodor edition reads minim ("sectarians") for epikorsim ("heretics"). Rabbi Abbahu was famed for his polemical defense of Judaism against heretical and Christian attacks. On one occasion, he commented on Isa. 44:6: "I am first--for I have no father, and I am last--for I have no brother, and besides Me there is no God--for I have no son", cf. Exodus R., 29:5. Cf. also, Mordecai Margalioth, Enzyklopedia le-Hachme ha-Talmud ve-ha-Gaonim (Tel Aviv: n.d.), pp. 25-29.

19. TB Sukkah, 5a.

ר׳ יוסי אומר מעולם לא ירדה שכינה למטה ולא עלו משה
ואליהו למרום שנאמר השמים שמים לה׳ והארץ נתן לבני אדם
...ולא עלו משה ואליהו למרום והכתיב ומשה עלה אל האלהים
למטה מעשרה והכתיב ויעל אליהו בסערה השמים למטה מעשרה.

"R. Jose said: The Shechinah never descended [from heaven] and neither Moses nor Elijah ascended to heaven as it says, 'The heavens belong to God, but He has given the earth to man (Ps. 115:16)'...But did not Moses and Elijah ascend to heaven? Is it not written, 'And Moses went up to God (Ex. 19:3)'?--[He ascended to a point] ten handbreadths below [heaven].—But is it not written, 'And Elijah ascended in a whirlwind (II Kings 2:11)'?--[He ascended to a point] ten handbreadths below [heaven]."

20. Canticles R., 4:22.

ר׳ דרוסא ור׳ ירמיה בשם ר׳ שמואל בר יצחק ששים רבוא נביאים
עמדו להם לישראל בימי אליהו ר׳ יעקב...אמר ק"ב רבוא.

See also the statement in Lamentations R., 4:22: "The twist of Ahasuerus' ring was more beneficial to Israel in Media [in causing them to repent] than the 60,000 prophets who prophesied in the days of Elijah," and the statement in Tosephta Sotah, 12:5: "Before Elijah disappeared the holy spirit was abundant in Israel".

For a discussion of the Rabbinic view of the end of prophecy, see above, pp. 1-5.

21. For a convenient summary of the Rabbinic view of Rome, see "Rome", Encyclopedia Judaica, XIV, pp. 243-244. Cf. also, Geza Vermes, Post Biblical Jewish Studies (Leiden: 1975), pp. 215-224.

22. TY Avodah Zarah, 1, 2, 39c.

א"ר לוי יום שנתחתן שלמה לפרעה נכה מלך מצרים ירד מיכאל ונעץ קנה בים והעלה שלעטיט ונעשה חורש גדול וזה הוא כרך גדול שברומי יום שהעמיד ירבעם שני עגל זהב באו רומס ורומילס ובנו שני צריפים ברומי יום שנסתלק בו אליהו הועמד מלך ברומי...

The connection of Elijah's departure with the crowning of the first king of Rome is based on I Kings 22:48, "And there was no king in Edom...". Geza Vermes writes: "Antagonistic though they were, Jewish and Roman destinies seemed bound together. The legend attached to the nickname Edom-Rome, namely that the Jews, children of Jacob, and the Romans, descendants of Esau-Edom (Gen. 25:30), were cousins offered further nourishment to theological and eschatological thought. Their ancestors were in conflict from their mother's womb onwards over their birthright...In rabbinic thinking, it may be claimed, there is a synoptic history of Rome and Israel: sin here producing something beneficial there". Vermes, op. cit., p. 223.

23. I Kings 17:8-24.

24. Canticles R., 2:16.

ר׳ יודן כשם ר׳ זעירא ור׳ יוחנן כשם רשב"י אמרו גדולה היא
הפרנסה שגורמת לתחיית המתים לכא שלא כעונתה צרפית על ידי
שהאכילה את אליהו זכתה להחיות את כנה...ר׳ יהודה כר סימון
אמר...על ידי שקבלה אותו כסכר פנים יפות ומשמתו זכתה
להחיות את כנה.

25. PRE, 33

אמרה לו האשה כי כאת אלי והזכרת עוני עלי ומת כני...
ועמד אליהו והתפלל לפני הקב"ה ואמר רבש"ע לא די לי כל
הרעות שעברו עלי ועל ראשי אלא אף האשה הזאת שאני יודע
שמתוך צרת כנה דברה עלי לעקשני עכשיו ילמדו הדורות שיש
תחיית המתים השב את נפש הילד ונעתר לו...

The comment is based on I Kings 17-18, "...have you come [bata] to me to bring my sin to remembrance and to slay my son?" The Midrash connects biah ("coition") with bata ("you have come"). Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer, trans. Gerald Friedlander, (New York: 1965), p. 240. Genesis R., 50:11 attributes a different cause to the woman's outcry against Elijah:

...צרפית אמרה עד שלא כאת אצלי היה הקב"ה רואה מעשי
ומעשי אנשי עירי והיו מעשי רכים על אנשי כני עירי
והייתי צדקת כיניהם עכשו שכאת אצלי כאת אלי להזכיר
את עוני ולהמית את כני.

"...the woman of Zarephath said: Before you came to me, the Holy One, blessed be He looked upon my deeds and the deeds of the people of my city, and my deeds stood out above theirs, and I was considered a righteous person among them. However, now that you have come, you have made my sins apparent [in comparison to your righteousness] and caused my son to die".

26. Seder Eliahu Rabba, ed. M. Friedmann (Jerusalem: 1960), 5.

ומפני מה זכה אליהו שתחיה מת על ידו מפני שעשה רצונו
של מי שאמר והיה העולם הקב"ה והיה מתאנח על כבודו של
הקב"ה ועל כבודו של ישראל בכל יום תמיד והיה בדעתו כאילו
אבדו שונאי ישראל מן העולם בכל דור ודור שהיה אליהו
מוצא בני אדם צדיקים מיד היה מגפפן מחבקן ומנשקן ומברך
ומרומם ומשבח ומגדל לשמו של מי שאמר והיה העולם
הקב"ה.

27. Tanhuma Bereshit, 7.

אמר הקב"ה אני מחיה המתים ואליהו החיה מתים ולא אמר אל
אני אני מוריד הגשם ואליהו הוריד גשמים אני עוצר גשמים
ואליהו כן...אני הורדתי אש וגפרית על סדום ואליהו
הוריד כן...ולא אמר אל אני...כתיב ביה כרסיה שביבין
דינור וכתיב באליהו הנה רכב אש וסוסי אש כתיב ביה ה׳
בסופה ובסערה דרכו ובאליהו כתיב ויעל אליהו בסערה
השמים ולסוף וישאל את נפשו למות ואתה אומר אל אני...

Quite likely this statement is directed against the claim of divinity for Jesus.

28. Leviticus R., 27:4.

ר׳ אחא בשם ר׳ שמעון בן חלפתא כל מה שהקב"ה עתיד לעשות
בעולם הבא כבר הראם להם בעולם הזה שהוא מחיה מתים כבר
החיה מתים על ידי אליהו ועל ידי אלישע ועל ידי
יחזקאל...

Cf. parallels in Genesis R., 71:1; Ecclesiastes R., 3:18; and PK, 9:4.

That Elijah will resurrect the dead at the time of the future redemption is already alluded to in Mishnah Sotah, 9:15:

ורוח הקודש מביאה לידי תחיית המתים ותחיית המתים
באה על ידי אליהו זכור לטוב אמן.

Cf. above, p. 39 , n. 29 . The parallels to this Mishnah give a somewhat different progression. In these sources, the resurrection of the dead precedes the appearance of Elijah. Eliezer Margaliot, Eliahu ha-Navi, pp. 156-157, n. 7.

29. Mal. 3:23-24.

30. Halacha le-Moshe mi-Sinai, "A law going back to Moses at Sinai". This term was used to designate ancient traditions which had no support in any hermeneutic rule employed by the Rabbis. Cf. Max Kadushin, The Rabbinic Mind (New York: 1952), p. 92, n. 8, and Herman Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (New York: 1959), p. 9.

31. Mishnah Eduyot, 8:7.

אמר ר׳ יהושע מקובל אני מרבן יוחנן בן זכאי ששמע מרבו
ורבו מרבו הלכה למשה מסיני שאין אליהו בא לטמא ולטהר
לרחק ולקרב אלא לרחק המקרבין בזרע ולקרב המרחקין בזרע
ר׳ יהודה אומר לקרב אבל לא לרחק רבי שמעון אומר...
להשוות המחלקת וחכמים אומרים לא לרחק ולא לקרב אלא
לעשות שלום בעולם שנאמר הנני שלח לכם את אליהו הנביא

וגו' והשיב לב אבות על בנים וגו'.

32. PRE, 34

ר' יהודה אומר אם אין ישראל עושין תשובה אינן נגאלין ואין
ישראל עושין תשובה אלא מתוך הצער ומתוך הדחק ומתוך הטלטול
ומתוך שאין להם מחיה ואין ישראל עושין תשובה גדולה עד
שיבא אליהו ז"ל שנא' הנה אנכי שולח לכם...והשיב לב אבות
על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם.

33. Ecclesistes R., 4:1.

ר' יהודה אומר אלו הקטנים הנגנזים בחייהן בעון אבותם
בעולם הזה לעולם הבא הן עומדין בצד חבורה של צדיקים
ואבותיהם בצד חבורה של רשעים והם אומרין לפניו רבש"ע
כלום מתנו אלא בעון אבותינו יבואו אבותינו בזכיותינו
והוא אומר להם אבותיכם חטאו מאחוריכם וחטאתיהם מלמדין
קטיגור ר' יהודה בר אלעי בשם ריב"ל באותה שעה אליהו זכור
לטוב יושב ומלמד סניגוריא ואומר להם אמרו לפניו רבש"ע
אי זו מדה מרובה מדת הטובה או מדת הפורענות אמור מדת
הטובה מרובה ומדת הפורענות מעוטה ומתנו בעון אבותינו
אם מדת הטובה מרובה לא כל שכן שיבואו אבותינו אצלנו
אמר להם יפה למדתם סניגוריא יבואו אצלכם.

34. L. Ginzberg, Legends, IV, pp. 233-235. Cf. also the Grace after Meals: "May the All Merciful send us Elijah the prophet (let him be remembered for good), who shall bring us good tidings, salvation and consolation". The Authorized Daily Prayer Book, ed. Joseph H. Hertz, (New York: 1963), p. 975.

35. Mekilta Beshalach on Ex. 16:32, p. 172.

וזה אחד משלשה דברים שאליהו עתיד להעמיד לישראל צלוחית
המן וצלוחית של מי נדה וצלוחית של שמן המשחה...

"And this [the flask of manna] is one of the three things that Elijah will restore to Israel in the [messianic] future: the flask of manna, the flask of water for purification, [from contact with a corpse] and the flask of annointing oil". The idea that Elijah will anoint the messiah is first found in Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho the Jew (chapter 8 end and chapter 49 beginning). It is based on the Rabbinic association of Elijah with Phinehas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aaron the priest. Cf. Joseph Klausner, The Messianic Idea in Israel (New York: 1955), pp. 455-456. For the association of Elijah with Phinehas, cf. Seder Eliahu Rabba, pp. 6-11 (Introduction).

36. TB Sukkah, 52b.

ויראני ה׳ ארבעה חרשים מאן נינהו ארבעה חרשים אמר רב
חנא בר ביזנא אמר רבי שמעון חסידא משיח בן דוד ומשיח
בן יוסף ואליהו וכהן צדק...ומאן נינהו שמונה נסיכי
אדום ישי ושאול ושמואל עמוס וצפניה צדקיהו ומשיח ואליהו.

For variations in the parallel texts and a discussion of the identity of the Ephramitic messiah and the Righteous Priest, cf. E. Margaliot, Eliahu, p. 161, n. 2.

37. See above, p. 54.

38. *Leviticus R.*, 34:8.

ר׳ כהן ר׳ יהושע דסיכנין בשם ר׳ לוי לשעבר היה אדם עושה
מצוה והנביאים כותבין עכשיו שאין נביאים מי כותב אותה
אליהו ומלך המשיח והקב"ה חותם על ידיהם דכתיב אז נדברו
יראי ה׳ איש אל רעהו ויקשב ה׳ וישמע ויכתב ספר זכרון לפניו.

"...In the past when a person performed a good deed, the prophets recorded it. Now, when there are no prophets, who records it? Elijah and the King Messiah, and the Holy One, blessed be He places His seal on it".

See also the quote from *TB Kiddushin*, 70a cited below, p.101, n. 43.

39. *Midrash Psalms*, 3:7.

אני שכבתי ואישנה אמרה כנסת ישראל אני שכבתי מן הנבואה
ואישנה מרוח הקדש הקיצותי על ידי אליהו שנא׳ הנה אנכי
שולח לכם את אליהו הנביא כי ה׳ יסמכני על ידי מלך המשיח.

"'I laid me down and I slept (Ps. 3:7)' -- The Congregation of Israel said: I laid me down away from prophecy; and I slept, apart from the holy spirit; 'I awake (ibid)' -- through Elijah as it says, 'Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet (Mal 3:23)'; 'For the Lord sustains me (Ps. 3:7)' -- through the King Messiah."

40. E. Margaliot, *Eliahu*, pp. 174-177.

41. Seder Olam Rabba, ch. 17, p. 72.

ועכשיו הוא כותב מעשה הדורות כלם.

"And now he records the deeds of all the generations".

42. See above, p.100, n. 38.

43. TB Kiddushin, 70a.

כל הנושא אשה שאינה הוגנת לו אליהו כופתו והקב"ה רוצעו.

44. R. Judah the Patriarch had been afflicted with a toothache as punishment for his lack of compassion for animals. Genesis R., 33:3.

45. TY Kilaim, 9, 3, 32b.

רבי הוה ענוון סגין והוה אמר כל מה דיימי לי בר נשא
אנא עביד...אין סליק רב הונא ריש גלותא להכא אנא
מותיב ליה לעיל מיניי דהוא מן יהודה ואנא מבנימין
חד זמן אעל רבי חייא רובא לגביה אמר ליה הא רב...
הונא לבר נתכרכמו פניו של רבי אמר ליה ארונו בא אמר
ליה פוק וחמי מאן בעי לך לבר ונפק ולא אשכח בר נש
וידע דהוא כעיס עלוי עבד דלא עליל לגביה תלתין יומין
לסוף תלת עשרתי שניא ותלתתוי יומיא עאל אליהו...
לגביה כדמות רבי חייא רובא אמר ליה מה מרי עביד
אמר ליה חד שיניי מעיקה לי...ויהבה אצבעתיה עלה
ואינשמת למחר עאל ר׳ חייא רובה לגביה אמר ליה
מה עביד רבי האי שינך מה היא עבידה אמר ליה מן
ההוא שעתא דיהב אצבעתך עלה אינשמת...אמר ליה
אנא לא הוינא מן ההיא שעתא הוה נהיג ביה ביקר
בד הוה עליל לבית ורעדא הוה אמר יכנס רבי חייא
רובא לפנים.

The story is also told with slight variations in Genesis R., 33:3.

46. Deuteronomy R., 5:14.

מעשה בר' מאיר שהיה יושב ודורש...הלכה אותה אשה לביתה
...א"ל בעלה היכן היית עד עכשיו אמרה לו שומעת הייתי
לר' מאיר דורש...א"ל בכך וכך אין את נכנסת לביתי עד
שתלכי ותרוקי בפניו של ר' מאיר יצאה לה מביתו נגלה
אליהו זכור לטוב על ר"מ א"ל הרי בשבילך יצאה האשה
מביתה...מה עשה ר"מ הלך וישב לו בבית המדרש הגדול
באתה אותה אשה...אמר מי יודע ללחוש לעין אמרה לו
אותה אשה אני באתי ללחוש רקקה בפניו א"ל אמרי לבעליך
הרי רקקתי בפניו של ר' מאיר...

The story appears originally in TY Sotah, 1, 4, 16d. It also appears in somewhat greater detail in Leviticus R., 9:9. According to these sources it was by means of the holy spirit that R. Meir saw what had happened between the woman and her husband. Elijah is not mentioned. This seems to indicate an enhancement of Elijah's role in later sources.

47. TB Taanit, 21a.

זימנא חדא בעו לשדורי ישראל דורון לבי קיסר אמרו מאן
ייזיל ייזיל נחום איש גם זו דמלומד בניסין הוא שדרו
בידיה מלא סיפטא דאבנים טובות ומרגליות אזל בת בההוא
דורה בליליא קמו הנך דיוראי ושקלינהו לסיפטיה ומלנוהו
עפרא כי מטא התם בעא מלכא למקטלינהו לכולהו אמר קא
מחייכו בי יהודאי אתא אליהו אדמי ליה כחד מינייהו
א"ל דלמא הא עפרא מעפרא דאברהם אבוהון הוא דכי
הוה שדי עפרא הוו סייפיה גילי הוו גירי...הויא
חדא מדינתא דלא מצו למיכבשיה בדקו מיניה וכבשוה

עיילו לבי גנזיה ומלוהו לסיפטיה אבנים טובות ומרגליות
ושדרוהו ביקרה רבה.

The story is told with slight variations in TB Sanhedrin, 109a.

48. TB Avodah Zarah, 18b.

...אתא אליהו אדמי להו כזונה כרכתיה אמרי חס ושלום
אי ר מאיר הוה לא הוה עביד הכי.

49. TB Baba Meziah, 84a.

פגע ביה אליהו אמר ליה עד מתי אתה מוסר עמו של אלהינו
להריגה אמר ליה מאי אעביד הרמנא דמלכא הוא אמר ליה
אבוך ערק לאסיא את ערוק ללודקיא.

R. Ishmael's father, R. Jose bar Halafta, fled to Asia Minor during the Hadrianic persecutions after he had been ordained in violation of governmental decree. In this connection see also the story of R. Joshua ben Levi and a Jewish rebel whom he was forced to deliver to the Romans and Elijah's angry reaction, cf. above, p. 85.

50. TB Shabbat, 33b.

...איתבו תריסר שני במערתא אתא אליהו וקם אפיתחא דמערתא
אמר מאן לודעיה לבר יוחי דמית קיסר ובטיל גזירתיה.

51. Heinrich Graetz, History of the Jews (Philadelphia: 1956), II, pp. 421ff.

52. Cf. TB Makkot, 24a-b. R. Akibah comforted his colleagues who were saddened when they contrasted

the wealth of Rome with the ruins of the Temple by explaining that if God had allowed sinners to enjoy such splendor, He would surely grant His people Israel an even greater measure of glory. See above, p. 25 for another example of R. Akibah's consolation of his colleagues.

53. Genesis R., 83:4.

...שהוא עתיד לערום תסוירות למלך המשיח אמר ר׳ לוי
מעשה בשלטון אחד ברומי שהיה מבזבז תסוירות של אביו
נראה לו אליהו בחלום אמר לו אבותיך מצמתין ואתה
מבזבז ולא זז עד שמלאן.

54. TY Berakot, 9, 3, 13c.

אליהו ז"ל שאל לר׳ נהוריי מפני מה באין זועות לעולם אמר
ליה בעון תרומה ומעשרות...אמר ליה בני...כך היא עיקרו
של דבר אלא בשעה שהקב"ה מביט בבתי תיטריות ובבתי
קרקסיות יושבות בטח ושאנן ושלוה ובית מקדשו חרב הוא
אפילון לעולמו להחריבו...

See parallel in Midrash Psalms, 104:25.

55. TB Hagigah, 9b.

א"ל אליהו לבר הי הי וא"ל לר׳ אלעזר מאי דכתיב הנה צרפתיך
ולא בכסף בחרתיך בכור עני (Isa. 48:10) מלמד שחזר הקב"ה
על כל מדות טובות ליתן לישראל ולא מצא אלא עניות.

"Elijah said to Bar Hé Hé...: What is the meaning of the verse, 'Behold, I have refined you but not with silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction'. It teaches that when God reviewed all of the favors

He might bestow on Israel, He found poverty to be the best".

The exact identification of Bar Hé Hé is unclear. It is likely, however, that he was a proselyte or the descendant of one. Cf. The Ethics of the Talmud. trans. R. Travers Herford, (New York: 1962), pp. 145-146.

56. For a brief analysis of the Rabbinic attitude towards poverty, cf. "Poverty", Encyclopedia Judaica, XIII, pp. 945-946.

57. TB Baba Meziah, 114a-b.

אשכחיה רבה בר אבוה לאליהו דקאי בבית הקברות של עובדי
כוכבים...אמר ליה לאו כהן הוא מר מאי טעמא קאי מר
בבית הקברות א"ל לא מתני טהרות דתניא ר"ש בן יוחי
אומר קבריהן של עובדי כוכבים אין מטמאין...אמר ליה
בארבעה לא מצינא בשיתא מצינא א"ל ואמאי אמר ליה דחיקא
לי מילתא דבריה ועייליה לגן עדן אמר ליה פשוט גלימך
ספי שקול מהני טרפי ספא שקל כי הוה נפיק שמע דקאמר
מאן קא אכיל לעלמיה כרבה בר אבוה נפץ שדנהו אפילו
הכי אתייה לגלימיה סחט גלימא ריחא זבניה בתריסר
אלפי דינרי פלגינהו לחתנוותיה.

For a similar legend about R. Haninah ben Dosa (first century C.E.), cf. TB Taanit, 25a.

58. TB Kiddushin, 40a.

רב כהנא הוה קמזבין דיקולי תבעתיה ההיא מטרוניתא אמר לה
איזיל איקשיט נפשאי סליק וקנפיל מאיגרא לארעא אתא אליהו
קבליה אמר ליה אטרחונן ארבע מאה פרסי א"ל מי גרם לי

לאר עניותא יהב ליה שיפא דדינרי.

59. TB Nedarim, 50a.

אתא אליהו אידמי להון כאנשא וקא קרי אבבא אמר להו הבו
לי פורתא דתיבנא דילדת אתתי ולית לי מידעם לאגונה אמר
לה ר׳ עקיבא לאנתתיה חזי גברא דאפילו תיבנא לא אית ליה.

For a version of this story that does not mention Elijah and in which the theme of poverty is not present, see above, p. 38, n. 26.

60. TB Baba Bathra, 7b.

והא ההוא חסידא דהוה רגיל אליהו דהוה משתעי בהדיה עבד
בית שער ותו לא משתעי בהדיה.

61. TB Yebamoth, 63a.

אשכחיה רבי יוסי לאליהו א"ל כתיב אעשה לו עזר במה אשה
עוזרת לאדם א"ל אדם מביא חיטין כוסס פשתן פשתן
לובש לא פמצאת מאירה עיניו ומעמידתו על רגליו.

62. ARN(A), 2, pp. 8-9.

מעשה באדם אחד שקרא הרבה ושנה הרבה ושמש תלמידי חכמים
הרבה ומת בחצי ימיו והיתה אשתו נוטלת תפיליו וחוזרת בבתי
כנסיות ובבתי מדרשות והיתה צועקת ובוכה...לא היה אדם
שהשיב לה דבר פעם אחת נזדמן לה אליהו זכור לטוב...אמר
לה כשאת בנדתך כל אותן ג׳ ימים הראשונים מהו אצלך
אמרה לו רבי ח"ו שלא נגע בי אפילו באצבע קטנה שלו
...כל אותן ימים האחרונים מהו אצלך אמרה לו רבי אכלתי
ושתיתי עמו וישנתי עמו בבגדי על המטה ובשרו נגע בבשרי
אבל לא נתכוין לדבר אחר א"ל ברוך המקום שהרגו שכך
כתוב בתורה ואל אשה בנדת טומאתה לא תקרב.

Cf. also *TB Shabbat*, 13a-b.

63. *TB Yoma*, 19b.

...דא"ל אליהו לרב יהודה אחוה דרב חסידא אמריתו אמאי לא אתי משיח והא האידנא יומא דכיפורי הוא ואבעול כמה בתולתא בנהרדעא.

64. *PK*, 11:22.

ר' לעזר בר שמעון איתמני אנגרבטיס מפיק עבודה חד זמן אתא אליהו זכור לטוב לגביה בדמות סב חד...לא טב לך צייר אומנהון דאבהתך אמר ליה ואית בך מתני לי אמר ליה אין ואית דאמרין תלת עשרה שנין עבד אליהו זכור לטוב מתני ליה עד דאמר ספרא וכיון דאמ' ספרא אמרין אפילו גולתא לא הוה יכיל טעין.

65. *PRE*, 1.

...עד שנגלה לו אליהו ז"ל ואמר לו בן הורקנוס למה אתה בוכה אמר לו מפני שאני מבקש ללמוד תורה אמר לו אם אתה מבקש ללמוד תורה עלה לירושלים אצל ר"י בן זכאי.

Compare *ARN(A)*, 6, pp. 30-31; *ARN(B)*, 13, pp. 30-32, and *Genesis R.*, 42:1. Elijah is mentioned in none of these sources.

66. *TB Taanith*, 20a-b.

מעשה שבא רבי אלעזר בר שמעון ממגדל גדור מבית רבו והיה רכוב על החמור ומטייל על שפת נהר ושמח שמחה גדולה והיתה דעתו גסה עליו מפני שלמד תורה הרבה נזדמן לו אדם אחד שהיה מכוער ביותר אמר לו שלום עליך רבי ולא החזיר לו אמר ריקה כמה מכוער אותו האיש שמא כל בני עירך מכוערין כמותך אמר לו איני יודע אלא לך ואמור לאומן שעשאני כמה

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מכוער כלי זה שעשית כיון שידע שחטא ירד מן החמור ונשתטח
לפניו ואמר לו נעניתי לך מחול לי...

Rashi ad. loc. says that there are texts which read אליהו זכור לטוב for אדם אחד . See also Derek Erez Rabba, 4 and ARN(A), 41, p. 131 where the rabbi is identified as Simeon ben Eleazar.

67. Ibid., 22a.

ר' ברוקא חוזא הוה שכיח בשוקא דבי לפט הוה שכיח אליהו
גביה א"ל איכא בהאי שוקא בר עלמא דאתי א"ל לא אדהכי
והכי חזא לההוא גברא דהוה סיים מסאני אוכמי ולא רמי
חוטא דתכלתא בגלימיה א"ל האי בר עלמא דאתי הוא רהט
בתריה א"ל מאי עובדך...א"ל זנדוקא אנא ואסרנא גברי
לחוד ונשי לחוד ורמי פורייאי בין הני להני כי היכי
דלא ליתו לידי איסורא כי חזינא בת ישראל דיהבי נכרים
עלה עינייהו מסרנא נפשאי ומצילנא לה...א"ל מאי טעמא
לית לך חוטי ורמית מסאני אוכמי א"ל עיילנא ונפיקנא ביני
נכרים כי היכי דלא לידעו דיהודאה אנא כי הוו גזרי
גזירתא מודענא להו לרבנן ובעו רחמי ומבטלי לגזירתייהו
...אדהכי והכי אתו הנך תרי אחי א"ל הנך נמי בני
עלמא דאתי נינהו אזל לגבייהו אמר להו מאי עובדייכו
אמרו ליה אינשי בדוחי אנן מבדחינן עציבי אי נמי
כי חזינן בי תרי דאית להו תיגרא בהדייהו טרחינן
ועבדינן להו שלמא.

68. TB Shabbat, 109b.

רב שימי בר אשי בלע חיויא אתא אליהו אידמי ליה כפרשא
אוכליה כשותא במילחא וארהטיה קמיה תלתא מילי ונפק מיניה
גובי גובי.

"R. Shimei bar Ashi swallowed a snake. Elijah appeared to him in the guise of a horseman, made him eat cuscuta with salt and run three miles before him, and it came out of him in pieces".

69. TY Berakot, 9, 3, 13c.

אליהו ז"ל שאל לרבי נהריי מפני מה ברא הכ"ה שקצים ורמשים בעולמו אמר לו לצורך נבראו כשעה שהבריות חוטאין הוא מביט בהן ואומ׳ מה אלו שאין בהן צורך הרי אני מקיימן אלו שיש מהן צורך לא כל שכן אמר ליה עוד הן יש בהן צורך זבוב לצירעה פשפש לעלוקתה נחש לחפפית שבלון לחזית סממית לעקרב.

"Elijah asked R. Nehorai: Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, create crawling creatures? He answered: They were created for a purpose. When men sin, God looks at them [the crawling things] and says, 'If I preserve these useless creatures, how much more should I preserve those that have a use'! Elijah responded: they have a further use--the fly against the hornet's sting; the bedbug against the [swallowed] leech; the snake against scabs; the snail against a rash; the [crushed] spider against the scorpion's bite". Cf. also Midrash Psalms, 18:12.

70. TB Berakot, 29b.

אמר ליה אליהו לרב יהודה אחוה דרב סלא חסידא לא תרתח ולא תחטי לא תרוי ולא תחטי וכשאתה יוצא לדרך המלך בקונך וצא.

71. TB Gittin, 70a.

אמר ליה אליהו לרב נתן אכול שליש ושתה שליש והנח שליש לכשתכעוס תעמוד על מילואך.

72. Elisha ben Abuya (second century).

73. TB Hagigah, 15b.

אשכחיה רבה בר שילה לאליהו א"ל מאי קא עביד הקב"ה א"ל
קאמר שמעתא מפומייהו דכולהו רבנן ומפומיה דרבי מאיר לא
קאמר א"ל אמאי משום דקא גמר שמעתא מפומיה דאחר א"ל אמאי
ר"מ רמון מצא תוכו אכל קליפתו זרק א"ל השתא קאמר מאיר
בני אומר.

74. TB Gittin, 6b.

רבי אביתר אמר זבוב מצא לה ר' יונתן אמר נימא מצא לה
ואשכחיה ר' אביתר לאליהו א"ל מאי קא עביד הקב"ה א"ל
עסיק בפילגש בגבעה ומאי קאמר אמר ליה אביתר בני כך
הוא אומר יונתן בני כך הוא אומר...

75. TB Baba Meziah, 59b.

...אמר להם אם הלכה כמותי חרוב זה יוכיח נעקר חרוב
ממקומו מאה אמה...אמרו לו אין מביאין ראיה מן החרוב
חזר ואמר להם אם הלכה כמותי אמת המים יוכיחו חזרו
אמת המים לאחוריהם אמרו לו אין מביאין ראיה מאמת המים
חזר ואמר להם אם הלכה כמותי כותלי בית המדרש יוכיחו
הטו כותלי בית המדרש ליפול גער בהם ר' יהושע אמר להם
אם תלמידי חכמים מנצחים זה את זה בהלכה אתם מה טיבכם
...חזר ואמר להם אם הלכה כמותי מן השמים יוכיחו
יצאתה בת קול ואמרה מה לכם אצל ר"א שהלכה כמותו
בכל מקום עמד רבי יהושע על רגליו ואמר לא בשמים
היא...אשכחיה רבי נתן לאליהו א"ל מאי עביד קוב"ה
בההיא שעתא א"ל קא חייך ואמר נצחוני בני נצחוני בני.

76. Ibid., 85b.

...דאמרי ליה לאליהו אחוי לי רבנן כי סלקי למתיבתא דרקיע

אמר לי ככולהו מצית לאסתכולי כהו לכר מגוהרנקא דר׳
חייא...

"...I requested Elijah to show me the [departed] Rabbis as they ascend to the Heavenly Academy. He replied: You can look upon all except the carriage of R. Hiyya...".

77. Ibid.

אליהו הוה שכיח במתיבתא דרבי יומא חד ריש ירחא הוה
נגה ליה ולא אתא א"ל מאי טאמא נגה ליה למר אמר ליה
אדאוקימנא לאברהם ומשינא ידיה ומצלי ומגנינא ליה וכן
ליצחק וכן ליעקב ולאקמינהו בהדי הרדי סברי תקפי ברחמי
ומייתי ליה למשיח בלא זמניה א"ל ויש דוגמתן בעולם
הזה אמר ליה איכא ר׳ חייא ובניו גזר רבי תעניתא
אחתינהו לר׳ חייא ובניו אמר משיב הרוח ונשבה זיקא
אמר מוריד הגשם ואתא מיטרא כי מטא למימר מחיה המתים
רגש עלמא אמרי ברקיעא מאן גלי רזיא בעלמא אמרי
אליהו אתיוהו לאליהו מחיוה שתין פולסי דנורא אתא
אידמי להו כדובא דנורא על בינייהו וטרדינהו.

78. TB Berakot, 3a.

אמר לי ר׳ יוסי פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך ונכנסתי לחורבה
אחת מחורבנות ירושלים להתפלל בא אליהו זכור לטוב ושמר
לי על הפתח...ואמר לי בני מה קול שמעת בחורבה זו
ואמרתי לו שמעתי בת קול שמנהמת כיונה ואומרת אוי
לבנים שבעונותיהם החרבתי את ביתי ושרפתי את היכלי
הגליתים לבין האומות ואמר לי חייך וחיי ראשך לא שעה
זו בלבד אומרת כך אלא בכל יום ויום שלש פעמים אומרת
כך ולא זו בלבד אלא כשעה שישראל נכנסין לבתי כנסיות
ולבתי מדרשות ועונין יהא שמיה הגדול מבורך הקב"ה

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מנענע ראשו ואומר אשרי המלך שמקלסין אותו בביתו כך מה
לו לאב שהגלה את בניו ואוי להם לבנים שגלו מעל שלחן
אביהם.

"R. Jose said: Once I was walking on the road and came upon one of the ruins of Jerusalem in order to pray. Elijah, may he be remembered for good, came and observed me at the entrance...He said to me: My son, what voice did you hear in this ruin? I replied: I heard a heavenly voice wailing like a dove, saying woe to the children for whose sins I have destroyed My Temple and burnt My palace. I have exiled them amongst the nations. He said to me: By your life, not only now does it say this, but three times every day it says this. Moreover, when Israel enters into synagogues and academies and says, 'May His great name be blessed', the Holy One, blessed be He, shakes His head and says, 'Happy is the King who is thus praised in His house; woe to the Father who has exiled His children, and woe to the children who have been exiled from the table of their Father".

79. TB Sanhedrin, 97b.

אמר ליה אליהו לרב יהודה אחוה דרב סלא חסידא אין העולם
פחות משמונים וחמשה יובלות וביובל האחרון בן דוד בא.

80. See above, p. 75.

81. Genesis R., 35:2.

אליהו זכור לטוב ור' יהושע בן לוי הוון יתבין תניין

בחדא מטון שמועה מן דר' שמעון בן יוחאי אמרי הא מרא
דשמעתא נעול ונשילה על אליהו זכור לטוב לגבה...

"Elijah, may he be remembered for good, and R. Joshua ben Levi were sitting and studying together. They came to a teaching of R. Simeon bar Yohai. Elijah said: Here is the author of the teaching, let us go and ask him about it...".

The same story is told with slight variation in PK, 11:15.

82. PK, 18:5.

ר' יהושע קם עם אליהו זכור לטוב אמר ליה לית מרי מחמי ליה
אילין כדכודיה אמר ליה אין הראה לו על ידי נס.

"Standing with Elijah, may he be remembered for good, R. Joshua ben Levi asked: Will my master not show me these kadkudaya stones? He replied: Yes, and contrived a miracle to show them to him".

83. TB Sanhedrin, 98a.

רבי יהושע בן לוי אשכח לאליהו דהוי קיימי אפיתחא
דמערתא דרבי שמעון בן יוחאי...אמר ליה אימת אתי משיח
אמר ליה זיל שייליה לדידיה והיכא יתיב אפיתחא דקרתא
ומאי סימניה יתיב ביני עניי סובלי חלאים וכולן שרו
ואסירי בחד זימנא איהו שרי חד ואסיר חד אמר דילמא
מבעינא דלא איעכב אזל לגביה אמר ליה שלום עליך רבי
ומורי אמר ליה שלום עליך בר ליואי א"ל לאימת אתי
מר א"ל היום אתא לגבי אליהו...א"ל שקורי קא שקר בי
דאמר לי היום אתינא ולא אתא א"ל הכי אמר לך היום
אם בקולו תשמעו.

84. TB Makkot, 11a.

כי הא דההוא גברא דאכליה אריא ברחוק תלתא פרסי דר' יהושע
בן לוי ולא אישתעי אליהו בהדיה תלתא יומי.

85. Genesis R., 94:9 end.

עולא בן קישר תבעתה מלכותא קם וערק לגבי ר' יהושע בן
לוי ללוד שדר פרדיסקי בתרה אטפל לה ר' יהושע בן לוי
ופיסה ואמר לה מוטב דלקטיל ההוא גברא ולא לענשו צבורא
על ידי אפיס לה ויהב נהלה הוה קא משתעי אליהו בהדה
כיון דעבד הכי לא אתא לגבה צם על תלתין יומין ואתחזי
לה אמר לה מאי טעמא אפגר מר אמר לה וכי חבר אני
למסורות אמר לה ולא מתניתא היא סיעה של בני אדם
שאמרו להם גוים אמר וכי משנת חסידים היא מבעי להאי
מלתא מתעברא על ידי אחריני ולא על ידך.

The story also appears in TY Terumot, 8, 10, 46b. R. Joshua's defense was based on Tosephta Terumot, 7:20.

סיעה של בני אדם שאמרו להם גוים תנו לנו אחד מכם
ונהרוג אותו ואם לאו הרי אנו נהרוג את כלם יהרגו כלם
ולא ימסרו נפש אחת מישראל ואם ייחדוהו להם כגון
שייחדוהו לשבע בן בכרי יתנוהו לחם ואל יהרגו כלם.

"A company of men to whom the Gentiles say: Give us one of you and we shall kill him or else we shall kill all of you, let them all die rather than deliver one soul from Israel. However, if they specified by name as Sheba ben Bichri was specified by name (II Sam 20:21-22), they should deliver him and not all be killed".

86. TB Ketubot, 77b.

כי הוה שכיב אמרו ליה למלאך המות זיל עביד ליה רעותיה
אזל איתחזי ליה א"ל אחוי לי דוכתאי אמר ליה לחיי א"ל
הב לי סכינך דלמא מבעתת לי באורחא יהבה ניהליה כי מטא
להתם דלייה קא מחוי ליה שוור נפל לההוא גיסא נקטיה
בקרנא דגלימיה א"ל בשבועתא דלא אתינא...אמר ליה הב
לי סכינאי לא הוה קא יהיב ליה נפקא בת קלא ואמרה
ליה הב ניהליה דמיתבעא לבייתא מכריז אליהו קמיה
פנו מקום לבר ליואי פנו מקום לבר ליואי.

"When he [R. Joshua] was about to die, the Angel of Death was instructed to carry out his wish. He went and appeared to him. He [R. Joshua] said: Show me my place in Paradise. The Angel replied: Very well. R. Joshua then said: Give me your knife lest you frighten me on the way. He gave it to him. When they arrived there, he lifted him up and showed him his place. R. Joshua jumped and fell on the other side. The Angel seized him by the corner of his cloak. R. Joshua said: I swear that I will not go back...The Angel said: Give me my knife. However, R. Joshua did not return it to him. A heavenly voice then said: Return it to him for it is needed for the mortals. Elijah heralded him proclaiming: Make way for the son of Levi, make way for the son of Levi".

87. TY Sanhedrin, 10, 2, 28b.

אמר לון אחאב וכי מי גדול ממי משה או יהושע אמרין
ליה משה אמר לון בתורתו של משה כתוב השמרו לכם פן
יפתה לבבכם וסרתם ועבדתם...ומה כתיב בתריה וחרה אף
ה׳ בכם ועצר את השמים...ולא הנחתי ע"ז בעולם שלא עבדתי
אותה וכל טבן ונחמן דאית בעלמא אתון בדרי מילוי דמשה
לא קמן ומילוי דיהושע מקים א"ל אליהו אם כדבריך חי
ה׳...אם יהיה השנים האלה טל ומטר כי אם לפי דברי.

"Ahab said to them: Who is greater, Moses or Joshua? They replied: Moses. He said to them: The Torah of Moses says, 'Take care not to be lured away to serve other gods...(Deut. 11:16)', and afterwards it is written, 'For the Lord's anger will flare up against you, and He will shut up the skies...(ibid, 11:17)'. Yet, there is no form of idolatry that I have not practiced and I have prospered. The words of Moses have not come to pass and the words of Joshua have come to pass". (Joshua's curse upon anyone who would rebuild Jericho--Josh. 6:26--had been realized in the death of the sons of Hiel who had rebuilt the city. Cf. I Kings 16:34).

88. TY Berakot, 5, 2, 9b.

כך אמר לו הקב"ה לאליהו לך והתר נדרו של טל שאין
המתים חיים אלא בטללים ואני מחיה את בנה של צרפית.

"...the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Elijah: Go and annul your oath prohibiting dew (I Kings 17:1) because the resurrection of the dead can be effected only by means of dew, and I will revive the son of the woman of Zarephath".

89. Canticles R., 1:6.

א"ל הקב"ה בריתי שמא בריתך את מזבחותיך הרסו א"ל מזבחותי שמא מזבחותיך ואת נביאיך הרגו בחרב א"ל נביאי ואת מה איכפת לך.

90. Mekilta Bo on Ex. 12:1, p. 4.

...קנא קנאתי לה אלהי צבאות...ומה נאמר ויאמר לך שוב לדרכך מדברה דמשק...ואת יהוא בן נמשי תמשח למלך על ישראל ואת אלישע בן שפט תמשח לנביא תחתיך שאין תלמוד לומר לנביא תחתיך אלא שאי אפשי בנבואתך...

"I have been very zealous for God, the Lord of Hosts...(I Kings 19:14)'...What is said further on? 'And He said: Go return on your way to the desert to Damascus and anoint...Elisha ben Shaphat as prophet in your place...(I Kings 19:15)'. The phrase "as a prophet in your place" means your prophesying is no longer acceptable to Me".

CHAPTER III

ISAIAH: PROPHET OF COMFORT

THE ROYAL PROPHET

As for most of its characters, the Bible provides few biographical data about the prophet Isaiah. The Rabbis, however, supplied a number of significant details. They believed Isaiah to be of royal lineage. A Talmudic tradition attests to the prophet's royal ancestry: "Rabbi Levi said: we have a tradition from our fathers that Amoz [the father of Isaiah] and Amaziah [the king of Judah] were brothers".[1] As a member of the royal family, Isaiah shared the distinction of being descended from Tamar, whom the Rabbis portray as a righteous woman.[2]

In addition to his royal ancestry, Isaiah was a native of the capital city, Jerusalem. While the Bible states only that Isaiah was born in Judah, the Rabbis were more specific. The first generation Amora Ulla declared that whenever a prophet is mentioned and his birthplace not mentioned, the presumption is that he was born in Jerusalem.[3] This tradition is followed in Vitae Prophetarum which says explicitly that Isaiah was born in Jerusalem.[4]

Isaiah's royal and urbane background had some effect on his prophetic activity. According to R. Levi, Isaiah could reprimand Israel in a sharp manner since he was the nephew of a king. This was in keeping with the verse in Proverbs, "the rich man speaketh up roughly (Prov. 18:23)".[5] The same rabbi contrasted the tone of Isaiah's rebuke of Israel with that of Jeremiah:

> R. Levi told the parable of a Roman lady who had in her household two representatives of her family, one from the countryside and the other from the city. When the countryman had occasion to reprimand her, he would do so in a kindly way, "Are you not a daughter of goodly stock, are you not the daughter of a nobleman?" But the one who was a city man would reprimand her in a sharp way, "Are you not the daughter of the lowly poor, are you not a daughter of humble origins?"

So Jeremiah, the prophet from the country town of Anatoth, would come to Jerusalem and reprimand Israel in a kindly manner, invoking the memory of their ancestors, and asking if they had conducted themselves in the sinful ways of the present generation (Jer. 2:5). Isaiah, on the other hand, who was a city man from Jerusalem, reprimanded Israel in a sharp manner, comparing them to the people of Sodom (Isa. 1:10).[6]

Isaiah's urban sophistication is the basis of an additional contrast between him and another prophet. The fourth generation Babylonian Amora, Rava, commented on the fact that both Isaiah and Ezekiel had experienced visions of God at the beginning of their prophetic careers.[7] Yet, each prophet reacted differently. Whereas Ezekiel provided a vivid and detailed description of what he saw, Isaiah is much more sparing. The reason, according to Rava, was that

UMI

Isaiah, being a city dweller was used to the pomp and pagaentry attached to seeing the king. Ezekiel, on the other hand, was from the country and had no experience in such matters.[8]

ISAIAH'S INAUGURATION

One of the ways in which the Rabbis maintained the association of Isaiah with royalty was by connecting critical dates in the prophet's career with royal personalities and events. Thus, according to Rabbinic tradition, Isaiah received his inaugural vision on the day that King Uzziah violated the Temple by attempting to offer a sacrifice.[9] This is the vision recorded in Chapter 6 of Isaiah.[10]

It was an appropriate enough beginning to Isaiah's prophetic career. The king had sinned by trying to arrogate to himself the priestly function, a clear violation of Torah law. God needed a messenger to guide Judah's kings in the path of proper conduct. Isaiah, himself of royal lineage, was to be such a messenger. A statement by R. Azariah in Leviticus Rabba describes Isaiah's call:

> R. Azariah in the name of R. Judah b. Simeon expounded on the verse (Ps. 45:8) as referring to Isaiah. Isaiah said: I was at leisure in my house of study, and I heard the voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us (Isa. 6:8)'. I have sent Micah, and they smote him on the cheek--as it is written, 'They smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek (Micah, 4:14)'; I sent Amos and they called him stammerer. As R. Phinehas has said: Why was he called Amos?--Because he was heavy ('amus'= laden) of tongue.

UMI

> Now whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said: Here am I; send me. Said the Holy One, blessed be He: Isaiah, My children are troublesome, they are stubborn. If you take it upon yourself to be degraded and to be beaten by My children, you are fit to go on My mission; if not, you are not fit to go on My mission. Isaiah replied: [I am willing to go] on these conditions,' I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair (Isa. 50:6)'. Am I not fit to go on a mission to Your children?[11]

Here, Isaiah is portrayed as selfless, and willingly assumes the difficult and thankless task of serving as God's messenger to the people of Israel. He does so out of an obvious love for and sense of duty towards God and Israel.

Pesikta Rabbati also records this story, and although the general outline and tenor of the two accounts are identical, there are some significant differences. The most important is that Pesikta Rabbati presents a more critical attitude towards Isaiah. After recounting Isaiah's willingness to be God's new prophet, this source describes Isaiah's fright and annoyance with himself. His fright is due to his having had a vision of God. He is annoyed because he lost a chance to gain eternal life. Had he joined the praise of the angels whom he saw in his vision praising God, he, like the angels, would have attained eternal life.[12] To make matters worse, when he did open his mouth, Isaiah slandered Israel:

> While he was standing still dumbounded [from the shock of the vision], he uttered unseemly

> words and said, '[For I am a man of unclean lips] and I dwell amongst a people of unclean lips'.[13]

God then reprimanded Isaiah for speaking disparagingly of Israel. It was alright for Isaiah to speak critically of himself, but it was inappropriate for him to speak evil of Israel. As punishment, God ordered an angel to touch Isaiah's lips with a burning coal.[14]

ISAIAH AS COMFORTER

In Rabbinic eyes, Isaiah is the Prophet of Consolation. This is no doubt due to the great number of consolatory prophecies contained in his book. His love for Israel, and his defense of his people against any and all who would speak ill of them became his hallmark. The glowing coal that touched his lips at the time of his inauguration purged him of harsh words against Israel.

A Rabbinic statement on the arrangement of the prophetic books reflects this view of Isaiah. The Talmud provides the following sequence for the prophetic works: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah, The Twelve Minor Prophets.[15] In the course of the discussion which follows this listing, the question is raised: since Isaiah preceded Jeremiah and Ezekiel chronologically, why was he not placed before them. The answer reveals that the principal of arrangement in this listing was to place "destruction next to destruction and consolation next to consolation." Therefore, explains the Talmud, since the Book of Kings ends on a note of destruction, and since Jeremiah throughout speaks of destruction, Jeremiah was placed after Kings. Ezekiel followed Jeremiah since he too began with destruction. He ended, however, on a note of consolation. Since "Isaiah is full of consolation" it was appropriate that he should follow Ezekiel.[16] Despite the fact that it is only the later part of Isaiah (chs. 40-66) which is "full of consolation" and the first part of the book is by no means entirely consolatory in tone, the Rabbis consider Isaiah to be the prophet who is the greatest comforter of Israel.[17]

Another comment on the book of Isaiah underlines the Rabbinic association of Isaiah with consolation:

> One who sees the Book of Kings in a dream should look forward to greatness and riches; [one who sees] the Book of Isaiah should look forward to consolation; [one who sees] the Book of Jeremiah should look forward to punishment.[18]

As defender of Israel, Isaiah countered the prophecies of doom delivered by other prophets. Thus, he offset Moses' prophecy that Israel would be destroyed among the nations by prophesying the final redemption of Israel from its exile.[19] Similarly, the third generation Palestinian Amoraim R. Judah b. R. Simon and R. Aibu, declared that Isaiah anticipated and healed all of the severe prophecies of Jeremiah. As Scriptural proof texts for this assertion, they cite the twenty-two verses of the first chapter of Lamentations as Jeremiah's prophecies of destruction. Against each verse from Lamentations, the two Palestinian teachers match a counter prophecy of comfort from Isaiah.[20] For these fourth century Amoraim, the calamitous prophecies of Moses and Jeremiah were not projections into the future; they were descriptions of events that had transpired centuries ago. Israel had been scattered already twice among the nations, and Jeremiah's laments were for a destruction that had taken place nearly a millenium ago. Isaiah's prophecies, on the other hand, were projections into the future. The Rabbis applied Isaiah's healing words of comfort to specific disasters that had occured already in Israel's historical experience, and by so doing, they assured their own generation that an eventual end to Israel's present sufferings was part of the divine scheme of things.

The same message is contained in another Palestinian comment which asserts that Isaiah's comforting words were not directed exclusively towards the generation that had witnessed the destruction of the Temple. Commenting on the use of the imperfect tense in Isa. 40:1, "comfort ye, comfort ye my people says your God," Rabbi Hanina ben Papa declared:

> Israel said to Isaiah: our teacher Isaiah, are we to suppose that you came to comfort only the generation in whose days the Temple

> was destroyed? He replied: I came to comfort all the generations. Hence Scripture does not say, "God said," but your God will keep saying.[21]

Rabbi Simon discussing the same verse, added an alternative but equally comforting reason for the use of the imperfect:

> ...according to R. Simon, Israel said to Isaiah: Our teacher, Isaiah, perhaps all the things you say you make up out of your own head. Isaiah replied: Scripture does not say "Your God [spoke to me alone]", but says Your God will keep saying [so that all the world will hear].[22]

R. Simon is not only providing substantiation for the veracity of the prophet's words. He is also indicating that Isaiah's words of comfort to Israel were meant for all nations to hear. The certainty of Israel's redemption is proclaimed to the peoples of the world. Those who would seek to destroy Israel are foretold by God through Isaiah that their evil designs will come to naught.

Isaiah's assurances of Israel's future vindication were not the only source of comfort the prophet provided. In a more immediate sense, Isaiah proclaimed the worthlessness of Israel's contemporary oppressor. A Palestinian Midrash commenting on Isa. 23:13 which refers to Babylonia as "the nation that was nothing" adds "let it still be called nothing."[23] The Midrash, of course, was not directing its barb against the Babylonians, for Rabbinic literature, and especially its Palestinian sources, identify Rome with Babylon.[24]

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COUNTERS ARGUMENTS OF GENTILES

A further service that Isaiah rendered to his people in his role as their comforter was to provide them with arguments to dispute the claims and taunts of their Gentile adversaries. Against those who pointed to Israel's downtrodden state in this world as proof of God's rejection, the Rabbis used Isaiah's words to indicate Israel's vindication in the world to come:

> Come and see the difference between the righteous and the wicked alluded to in the verse 'then you shall again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not serve Him (Mal. 3:18)'. To what can we compare this? To a lady who had a maid-servant and whose husband journeyed to an overseas country. All that night the maid-servant said to her matron: I am more comely than you and the king loves me more than you. The matron responded: when morning comes we shall see who is comely and whom the king loves. Even so the Gentiles say to Israel: our deeds are good and the Holy One, blessed be He, takes pleasure in us. Therefore, Isaiah said: let the morning come and we will know in whom the Holy One, blessed be He, takes pleasure, as it is written, 'the watchman said: The morning cometh and also the night (Isa. 21:12)' --Let the next world which is called morning come and we will know, as it is written, 'then you shall again see the difference between the righteous and the wicked (Mal. 3:18)'.[25]

Similarly, Isaiah provided Israel with arguments to refute the idolators who sought to find proof for their practices in Biblical texts. If the pagan nations should try to induce Israel to engage in the idolatrous practice of consulting the dead by means of the ghosts and the familiar spirits, Israel should not accept the misinterpretation in Isaiah that each nation including Israel should consult its own god in matters concerning the dead.[26]

ISAIAH'S SPECIAL FAVOR

Isaiah's comfort and defense of Israel and his refusal to condemn them as wicked pleased God. According to the Rabbis, this is the reason for the exceptional nature of Isaiah's prophetic powers. At the end of the section in Leviticus Rabbah recounting Isaiah's inauguration, the verse "you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows (Ps. 45:8)" is applied to Isaiah. The interpretation given for the words, "you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness" is that Isaiah loved to make Israel righteous, i.e. to defend them, and hated to make them wicked, i.e. condemn them. God rewarded Isaiah for this "above his fellows":

> God said to Isaiah: As you live, all the prophets received the gift of prophecy one from another as it is said, 'And he took of the spirit that was upon him and put it on the seventy elders...' but you from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is said, 'The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord has anointed me...'.[27]

Receiving the gift of prophecy directly from God was not Isaiah's only reward for his defense of Israel. Whereas all other prophets prophesied single words of comfort, Isaiah prophesied in double terms signifying that his prophecies contained a double portion of divine power.[28] Another source which expresses the same idea attributes Isaiah's double portion of divine power to his prophecy of consolation when he proclaimed to Jerusalem that her time of comfort was at hand because she had already received a double portion of divine punishment (Isa. 40:1-2).[29]

The Rabbis further elaborated the favor that God bestowed on Isaiah. They compared him to Moses in the clarity of his prophetic perception and in his outstanding ability to fulfill the prophetic function. Thus, only Moses, and Isaiah (and according to one view Elijah also) retained consciousness during their moments of prophecy:

> Rabbi Eleazar taught in the name of Rabbi Jose ben Zimra: none of the prophets, as they uttered their prophecies, knew that they were prophesying, except Moses and Isaiah who did know.[30]

Another Midrashic statement declares that "there are no greater prophets than Moses and Isaiah". It goes on to add significantly, "both of them approached God with supplications [on behalf of Israel]". Herein lies the source of their greatness. More than any of the other prophets, Moses and Isaiah pleaded with God on behalf of Israel.[31]

The Rabbis noted other special if not unique qualities that Isaiah possessed. He is one of those whom the Bible refers to as "created by God."[32] He was born circumcised, an indication of spiritual as well as physical

UMI

wholesomeness.[33] He is referred to as "His holy one," possibly because of his reference to God as the Holy One of Israel.[34]

Aside from all of these indications of special divine favor which the Rabbis attributed to Isaiah, they saw in him an extraordinary degree of religious and moral perception. He was able to reduce the 613 commandments of the Torah to six basic principles and ultimately to two.[35]

Isaiah's love for and comfort to Israel is all the more pronounced since, according to one Midrashic source, the people committed the grossest evils during his lifetime. The Palestinian Amora R. Levi compared Moses, Isaiah, and Jeremiah to the three groomsmen of the matron Israel. Only one of these, Moses, had the good fortune to behold the matron in her happiness. Jeremiah saw her in her hour of disgrace and banishment. Isaiah, however, had the bitter experience of witnessing her infidelity. Yet, this Midrash does not present Isaiah in a chastising pose. He, like Jeremiah, is portrayed as mournful over the disaster that had befallen the people.[36]

ISAIAH AS CHASTISER OF ISRAEL

Although R. Levi showed Isaiah grieving over his sinful generation, some other sources present Isaiah as a chastiser of Israel. The prophet sought to save the people of Israel from the disastrous consequences of their evil ways. Thus, we find that Isaiah sought to draw the people away from their idolatrous practices. R. Abba b. Kahana interprets the verse "Cry with a shrill voice, O daughter of Gallim (Isa. 10:30)" as referring to Isaiah pleading with the people to abandon their idols:

> Isaiah said to Israel, Rather than you should utter songs and praises before idols, cry with a shrill voice in the words of Torah, cry with a shrill voice in the Synagogues.[37]

Similarly, although the prophet castigated the haughty daughters of Zion (Isa. 3:16f), he pleaded with them to repent when he saw that God had determined to punish them.[38]

A much harsher tone is attributed to the prophet by the fourth century Amora R. Dimi, interpreting the first five verses of chapter three of Isaiah. This sage declared that Isaiah cursed Israel with eighteen curses, and his anger was not spent until he cursed them with the words "The child shall behave insolently against the aged, and the base against the honorable (verse 5)".[39] The Talmud then proceeds to enumerate the curses. Of the eighteen curses that the people will endure, sixteen refer to loss of teachers and expounders of the law. One refers to the loss of the king and one to the loss of prophets. The climactic curse, the one which finally assuaged Isaiah's anger, was that people who were ignorant of the law and who treated the commandments lightly would behave arrogantly toward the learned and those who were punctilious in their observance of the commandments. It is significant that in this Talmudic enumeration of the disasters only one refers to loss of land and political independence (the intent of the Biblical verses). Through Rabbinic eyes, the ultimate calamity for Israel is loss of the Torah and its legitimate and authoritative interpreters.

ISAIAH'S RELATIONS WITH AHAZ AND HEZEKIAH

Biblical Isaiah is portrayed as intricately involved in the political life of Israel, an advisor and confidant of kings who tries to bolster their spirits in the face of national calamity. The Rabbis embellished this picture of the prophet as patriot.

Isaiah and Ahaz

The Bible describes Ahaz as an evil king and Rabbinic legend stressed his wickedness. Nevertheless Isaiah sought to turn the king from his evil ways. The prophet's efforts, however, were not crowned with great success. A Midrashic story describes Isaiah's attempt to convince the king of God's power and guidance during a time of national crisis. The forces of the northern kingdom of Israel and of Aram had attacked Judah and Ahaz had decided to seek Assyrian aid:

> Isaiah said to him: Ask for a sign from the Lord your God, (Isa. 7:11)--that the dead be revived or that Korah arise from Sheol, or ask that Elijah descend from heaven.

UMI

Ahaz, however, refused to be swayed and answered, "I know that He has the power to do this, but I do not want the Name of God sanctified through me."[40]

Despite the arrogance of this reply, Isaiah did have some beneficent influence over Ahaz. In the Talmudic discussion on why Ahaz was not included in the Mishnaic list of those who do not have a share in the world to come, R. Joseph says Ahaz escaped that unenviable fate because he humbled himself before Isaiah.[41]

Isaiah and Hezekiah

According to the Rabbis, Isaiah developed a close relationship with the righteous king Hezekiah. When Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem, the ruling powers in Judea were divided on a course of action. While Hezekiah and his followers were not willing to conclude a humiliating peace with the Assyrian foe, the king's chamberlain, Shebna, led a larger group that sought to surrender. The king, confronted by a majority in opposition to his policy, had second thoughts and began to consider capitulation. Isaiah came and reassured the king that although a majority of his advisors counselled surrender, this was the advice of the wicked and should be discarded. Isaiah's advice proved sound as Sennacherib was forced to flee without conquering Jerusalem.[42]

Isaiah's role in this episode did not end with the success of his effort to bolster the king's courage.

UMI

Rabbinic sources also give Isaiah partial credit for the military victory over the Assyrians. While the Bible gives no explanation for Sennacherib's flight, the Rabbis explained it as the result of joint action on the part of Isaiah and Hezekiah. Thus, a late Midrash tells us that:

> when Sennacherib moved upon Jerusalem, Isaiah and Hezekiah sat in the Temple, and from between the two of them came forth a fire which devoured Sennacherib and his hosts.[43]

Despite the cooperation between Isaiah and Hezekiah reflected in these sources, friction quickly arose between the two. With victory achieved, the prophet once again visited the king and this time urged him and his advisors to praise God (Isa. 12:5). The Rabbis interpreted II Chron. 32:25 as meaning that Hezekiah became prideful and felt himself above praising God. According to one view, Hezekiah felt that his study of the Torah obviated the need for him to praise God. Another opinion had the king claim that there was no need to proclaim the miracles and mighty acts of God as these were already known throughout the world. Isaiah's visit had the purpose of helping the king regain a proper sense of perspective.[44]

Hezekiah's pride is the source of another Rabbinic legend linking the king with Isaiah. Rav Hamnuna related that neither Hezekiah nor Isaiah went to visit each other as both felt that it was befitting his dignity that the other should come to him. The deadlock was resolved through divine intervention. God afflicted Hezekiah with illness and commanded Isaiah to visit him. Isaiah complied with God's command and visited the king, informing him that he would not recover from his illness.[45] As the story continues, Isaiah appears in a very harsh light while the king is treated with much greater sympathy. When Hezekiah asks Isaiah for an explanation of this punishment, the prophet tells him it is because he had made no attempt to have children. The king then explains that he had seen in a dream that if he were to have children, they would not be righteous. The prophet once again reproves Hezekiah, telling him that he should have complied with God's command. Hezekiah then suggests that if Isaiah allowed him to marry his daughter, virtuous children would result from the union. Isaiah refuses declaring that "the doom has already been decreed." The episode concludes when the repentant Hezekiah angrily dismisses Isaiah and reproaches him by citing a tradition that he had from his ancestor (David): "even if a sharp sword rests upon a man's neck, he should not desist from praying for mercy."[46]

Isaiah emerges in an even more unflattering light in Ecclesiastes Rabba where this legend appears in a more embellished form. After rebuking Isaiah for his unsympathetic and tactless manner towards someone who is ill, Hezekiah dismissed Isaiah and his advice to set his house in order because death was near. The king then "turned his face to the wall (Isa. 38:2)" and prayed to

God for recovery. God accepted Hezekiah's prayer and the king recovered from his illness. However, when God told Isaiah to return to Hezekiah and to inform him that he would not die, the prophet balked:

> Isaiah spoke before Him: Lord of the universe, at first You say one thing to me and now another thing; how can I go and tell him this?[47]

God then reassured the prophet that the king, being a humble man, would accept his words and not remain angry over their previous meeting. Isaiah, however, was concerned not only with the reception he would get from the king, but also his reputation as a true prophet. How could he explain the two contradictory messages in the name of God? Finally, God appeased Isaiah by assuring him that his message predicting Hezekiah's death had not yet become a matter of public knowledge.[48]

The accounts of Isaiah's interviews with the ailing Hezekiah in the Talmud and Midrash present Isaiah in a negative cast. Only here and in his referring to Israel as a people of "unclean lips" do we find the Rabbis expressing criticism of Isaiah. It is instructive of the Rabbinic attitude towards the prophets that these two incidents should arouse Rabbinic disapproval. We have already alluded to the prophet's primary role as defender and consoler of Israel, and the Rabbis' aversion to criticism of Israel.[49] In the incident with Hezekiah, we meet another aspect of the Rabbinic understanding of

UMI

prophecy. The prophet must not be concerned with his reputation, his public image. The accuracy of his predictions of doom are not the key to a prophet's legitimacy. Isaiah felt that he would be discredited if he gave contradictory predictions. Isaiah's failure, however, lies not so much in his concern with his own public image, but with his failure either to console Hezekiah or to defend him, i.e. to pray to God on his behalf.[50] The prophet is consoler and defender of the righteous (and Hezekiah was a righteous king), not their harsh critic. Isaiah, although Israel's greatest consoler, nevertheless, had his failings. No prophet was perfect.

There is, we must add, one more source that deals with Isaiah's visit to Hezekiah, and it seeks to retrieve the honor of the prophet. Rabba bar Bar Hana, citing R. Johanan, informs us that Isaiah established a house of study at the door of the sick king.[51] From this precedent, the *Talmud* learns that when a scholar becomes ill, a house of study should be established at his door, as the study of Torah banishes disease. Thus, according to this source, the prophet did intervene on behalf of the king.

ISAIAH'S MARTRYDOM

In keeping with the theme of royalty that runs through the midrashic material on Isaiah, the *Aggadah* records that the prophet met his death at the hands of a king. Furthermore, that king was a direct relative of Isaiah, for according to Rabbinic tradition, Isaiah was the maternal grandfather of king Manasseh.[52]

Five Jewish sources speak of Isaiah's martyrdom. Of these, three are Talmudic and one is Midrashic.[53] The main source from which all of these accounts derive is the first century work The Martyrdom of Isaiah.[54] This book presents the most detailed account of the prophet's death and the events that led up to it.

Chapter one of this legendary source tells of Hezekiah setting his house in order and instructing his son Manasseh. Isaiah informs the king that Manasseh will not follow his instructions but will be ruled by Satan instead. The prophet then predicts his own martyrdom by declaring that Manasseh will have him sawed to death. Hezekiah thereupon decides to slay Manasseh but Isaiah dissuades him from this. Chapter two describes the spread of lawlessness, witchcraft and fornication which occurred during Manasseh's reign. Isaiah and his followers, seeing the lawlessness and idolatry that abound in Jerusalem, flee to the desert. Chapter three relates that the wicked Belchira[55] discovered the hiding place of Isaiah and denounced him before the king on the following grounds: a) Isaiah and his followers prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and the exile of the king and populace; b) Isaiah claimed to be greater than Moses. Whereas the latter declared that no man can see God and live, Isaiah declared that he had seen God; and c) he equated Jerusalem with Sodom and the princes of Judah and Jerusalem with the people of Gomorrah. Following this indictment, Manasseh had Isaiah seized. Chapter five states that Isaiah was sawed asunder in the presence of the mocking Belchira. In his agony, the prophet "neither cried aloud nor wept, but his lips spoke with the Holy Spirit until he was sawn in twain".[56]

Talmudic legend adopted the main outline of this story but added some details and deleted others. The second century Tanna, Simeon ben Azzai, introduces the account in the Babylonian Talmud by claiming that he found a genealogical scroll in Jerusalem in which was written "Manasseh slew Isaiah".[57] The Babylonian Amora, Rava, amplified this statement:

> He brought him to trial and then slew him. He said to him: Your teacher Moses said, "For men shall not see me and live (Ex. 33:20)" and you said, "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up (Isa. 6:1)". Your teacher Moses said, "For what (great nation is there, that has God so nigh unto them), as the Lord our God is whensoever we call upon Him (Deut. 4:7)" and you said, "Seek ye The Lord when He may be found (Isa. 55:6)". Your teacher Moses said, "The number of your days I will fulfill (Ex. 23:26)" but you said, "And I will add unto your days fifteen years (Isa. 38:5)". I know, thought Isaiah, that whatever I may tell him, he will not accept; and should I reply at all, I would only cause him to be a wilfull [homicide]. He thereupon pronounced[the Divine] Name and was swallowed up by a cedar. The cedar, however,

UMI

> was brought and sawn asunder. When the saw reached his mouth, he died. [And this was his penalty] for having said, "And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips (Isa. 6:5)".[58]

According to this source, Manasseh based his indictment of Isaiah on the prophet's apparent contradiction of certain statements in the Pentateuch.[59] Absent is any allusion to Isaiah's prophecy of destruction or his unsavory characterization of the princes of Jerusalem. M. Aberbach sees in this indictment a Rabbinic criticism of Isaiah for maintaining certain heterodox theological views.[60] However, the Talmudic discussion immediately following the story of Isaiah's martyrdom seeks to prove that no contradiction exists between Isaiah's views and those of the Pentateuch.[61] Clearly, the Rabbis were bothered by these contradictions or else they would not have bothered to "prove" that the contradictions do not exist. Nevertheless, the story itself explicitly indicates that Isaiah's unnatural death was a punishment for his slander of Israel when he described them as a people of "unclean lips". Heterodox belief was not his major crime. Although the Rabbis use it as a partial explanation of Isaiah's martyrdom, it seems more likely that in the Talmudic account, Isaiah's "slander" of Israel caused his unnatural death.

The Palestinian Talmud contains a shorter account of this story. This version omits any indictment. On the other hand, it adds the detail that Isaiah's fringes hanging from the cedar tree revealed the hiding place of the prophet.[62]

The Midrash Pesikta Rabbati contains another version of Isaiah's martyrdom.[63] According to this source, Manasseh put Isaiah to death because of his protest when the king set up an idol in the Temple. This tradition states that Isaiah delivered his last prophecy when Manasseh polluted the Temple. By declaring that, "the heavens are My throne and the earth My footstool (Isa. 66:1)," the prophet was telling the king that God rejected the defiled Temple. His glory could not be confined to any building, let alone one which contained an idol. Worse yet, the prophet warned that Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the Temple and exile the people. Hearing this, the king ordered Isaiah seized. The prophet fled and took refuge in a carob tree that opened itself to him. Manasseh then had the tree sawn in two, and Isaiah died.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACCOUNTS OF ISAIAH'S DEATH

It seems quite likely that the account of Isaiah's death contained in the Martyrdom of Isaiah served as the source for the other Rabbinic versions of the story. Each of the Rabbinic versions reproduces certain of the elements found in that work. All agree that Manasseh ordered

Isaiah's death and on the method of execution. The various sources, however, contain significant differences in the charges brought against Isaiah and in the Rabbinic attitude towards the prophet.

The Martyrdom of Isaiah provides the most elaborate indictment, one which levels three charges against Isaiah. Two of these charges are "national," i.e. predictions of national disaster and one is "theological," i.e. Isaiah's claim that he saw God. None of the other sources combine the national and theological charges. The account in the Babylonian Talmud deals exclusively with the theological matters and, on the other hand, that in Pesikta Rabbati attributes only a national crime to Isaiah.

In addition to differing in the content of their indictments against Isaiah, the sources also diverge in their treatment of Isaiah's culpability. The Martyrdom of Isaiah attributes no guilt to the prophet and presents him at the moment of his death speaking the pure words of a vision. The version in the Babylonian Talmud does ascribe guilt to Isaiah--he had referred to Israel as a people of "unclean lips". He was punished, accordingly, by expiring at the moment when the saw touched his mouth, an example of the Jewish theological principle of "measure for measure". The description in Pesikta Rabbati, like that in Martyrdom of Isaiah, sees no guilt in Isaiah. As in that source too, the mouth of the prophet is praised.

While he dies with words of a vision on his lips in Martyrdom of Isaiah, Pesikta Rabbati, through use of a word play, likens Isaiah to Moses with whom God spoke "mouth to mouth".

From the above analysis of the three sources, we see that Isaiah appears in the worst light in the account in the Babylonian Talmud. Here the stress is on his slander of Israel. Isaiah's harsh words in this instance were unjustified because they were unsolicited. They were not part of a message that God had delivered to him. Rather, they were his own expression. For the Rabbis, when a prophet was speaking his own words and not God's, and especially if he were speaking to God, his words should be only in defense of Israel. Therefore, this source possibly reflects some measure of satisfaction in the justice of Isaiah's fate. On the other hand, neither Martyrdom of Isaiah nor Pesikta Rabbati introduce Isaiah's slander of Israel into their accounts. In neither of these sources is Isaiah's mouth, the instrument through which he delivered God's word, held up to opprobrium. This despite the fact that the prophet was predicting a national calamity for Israel. On the contrary, in Martyrdom of Isaiah, he dies speaking the words of a vision, and in Pesikta Rabbati, he is compared to Moses. Isaiah was killed for speaking the chastising words of God--a legitimate prophetic function.

ISAIAH THE MARTYR

During the Hellenistic age, for the first time Judaism came into contact with a foreign civilization that actively sought to impose its way of life on its subject peoples. The confrontation between Hellenism and Judaism was prolonged and occasionally violent. The Jews, in general, resisted the forcible imposition of Hellenistic ways where there was a violation of religious rules involved. This milieu gave birth to a martyrological literature.[64] The martyrs portrayed in this literature became the prototypes for future generations of Jews who were confronted with the choice of death or disloyalty to the ideals and practices of Judaism. The story of Isaiah's martyrdom is part of this literature.[65]

It is noteworthy that of the early examples of martyrdom, the story of Isaiah's death did not become part of the fund of martyrological lore that later Jewish generations drew on for inspiration, courage, and guidelines for proper conduct under duress.[66] This is because Isaiah's death came about at the hands of another Jew.[67] The examples of early martyrs that retained significance for later generations of Jews, especially during the Christian Middle Ages, were those in which martyrdom involved an act of confrontation between the Jew and the outside world.[68] Martyrdom came to mean an affirmation of Judaism and a rejection of any other religious system.

UMI

Isaiah, who died because he faithfully carried out his prophetic mission, could not serve as an adequate example for future generations. He was killed by a Jewish king. This, therefore, was a family matter within the household of Israel. In the historical experience of future Jewish generations, martyrdom meant defiance not of a wicked Jewish ruler, but of an intolerant and hostile environment.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

1. *TB Megillah*, 10b.

   א"ר לוי דבר זה מסורת בידינו מאבותינו אמוץ ואמציה
   אחים הוו.

   Cf. also *PK*, 14:3. According to Jewish tradition, Amoz too was a prophet. Cf. *TB Megillah*, 10b and *TB Sotah*, 10b.

   According to a statement in *Leviticus R.*, R. Johanan is of the opinion that wherever the name of a prophet's father is mentioned along with the prophet's name, the father was also a prophet. *Leviticus R.*, 6:6. The majority opinion, however, is that whether or not the father's name is mentioned, both prophet and father were prophets. *Ibid*. Cf. also *TB Megillah*, 15a where this view is cited without the majority opinion.

2. *TB Megillah*, 10b.

   כל כלה שהיא צנועה בבית חמיה זוכה ויצאין ממנה מלכים
   ונביאים מנלן מתמר דכתיב ויראה יהודה ויחשבה לזונה כי
   כסתה פניה משום דכסתה פניה ויחשבה לזונה אלא משום דכסתה
   פניה בבית חמיה ולא הוה ידע לה זכתה ויצאו ממנה מלכים
   ונביאים.

   "Every bride who is modest in her father-in-law's house is rewarded by having kings and prophets among her descendants. How do we know this? From Tamar, as it is written, 'And Judah saw her and thought her to be a harlot; for she covered her face (Gen. 38:15)'.

Did he think she was a harlot because she covered her face? Rather, it means that because she covered her face in her father-in-law's house and he did not know her, she was rewarded by having kings and prophets among her descendants".

3. _Ibid_., 15a.

שמו ושם עירו מפורש כידוע שהוא מאותה העיר שמו ולא שם
עירו כידוע שהוא מירושלים.

4. ישעיה הנביא נולד בירושלים משבט יהודה.

S. Klein, "Al ha-Sefer Vitae Prophetarium", _Sefer Klausner_ (Tel Aviv: 1937), p. 194. There is an opposing Rabbinic tradition that there is no tribe that did not have a prophet descended from it. _Ibid_., pp. 204-205.

5. _PK_, 14:3.

א"ר לוי אמוץ ואמציה אחים היו ועל ידי שהיה ישעיה בן
אחיו של מלך היה או׳ ליש׳ דברים של קינתורין כמה דאת
או׳ ועשיר יענה עזות.

6. _Ibid_.

א"ר לוי למטרונה שהיו לה שני שושבינין אחד עירוני ואחד
בן מדינה זה שהיה עירוני היה אומר לה דברים של ניחומים
לא בת טובים את לא בת גנסים את וזה שהיה בן מדינה היה
אומר לה דברים של קינתורין לא בת עניים ירודים את לא
בת סכופים את כך ירמיה על ידי שהיה עירוני מענתות היה
נכנס לירושלים ואומ׳ לישר׳ דברים של ניחומים שמעו דבר ה׳
בית יעקב אילין מיליא עזיבתא הוון אבהתהון עבדין כרם

ישעיה על ידי שחיה כן מדינה מירושלים היה אומ' לישר' דברים
של קינתורין שמעו דבר ה' קציני סדום לא מן פליטתא דעמה
דסדום אתון.

This contrast of Isaiah's harshness with Jeremiah's kindly manner of reproach is unusual. See above, p. 124 and below, pp. 234-238.

7. On the Rabbinic view that chapter 6 is the beginning of the book of Isaiah, cf. L. Ginzberg, Legends, VI, p. 357, n. 29.

8. TB Hagigah, 13b.

אמר רבא כל שראה יחזקאל ראה ישעיה למה יחזקאל דומה לבן
כפר שראה את המלך ולמה ישעיה דומה לבן כרך שראה את המלך.

Rashi interprets this to mean that since Isaiah was a member of the royal family and grew up in the palace, he possessed that discretion which is characteristic of persons of that station. Details of what transpired in the palace were disclosed sparingly. Cf. Rashi *ad. loc.*

9. II Chron, 26:16-20. Tanhuma presents a somewhat embellished version of the story of Uzziah's sin and punishment. This source attributes the king's downfall to his bent for agricultural pursuits (II Chron. 26:10) which prevented him from devoting sufficient time to study of the Torah. Tanhuma Noah, 13 end. Cf. also ARN(A), 9, p. 42, and Josephus, Antiquities,

9,10:4. Neither of these sources mentions Uzziah's preoccupation with agriculture as the cause of his sin.

The earthquake alluded to in Isa. 6:4 is the one which split the Temple on the day of Uzziah's sacreligious act. Tanhuma Zav, 13. (The Midrash connects Isa. 6:4 and Zech. 14:5).

10. The words, "In the year that king Uzziah died (Isa. 6:1)", are not taken literally by the Rabbis. The "death" of Uzziah refers to his leprosy. Ibid.

ד׳ הם חיים וקראם הכתוב מתים ואלו הן האביון והמצורע
והעור ומי שאין לא בנים.

"There are four [types of] live people whom Scripture calls dead: the poor, the leper, the blind, and the childless". Uzziah is cited as an example of the leper.

11. Leviticus R., 10:2.

ר׳ עזריה בש׳ ר׳ יהודה בר סימון פתר קרייא בישעיה אמ׳
ישעיה מטייל הייתי בבית תלמודי ושמעתי בקולו שלהקב"ה
אומר את מי אשלח ומי ילך לנו שלחתי את מיכה היו מכין
אותו על הלחי הה"ד בשבט יכו על הלחי שלחתי את עמוס
והיו קורין אותו פסילוסא...אמ׳ ר׳ פינחס למה נקרא שמו
עמוס מפני שהיה עמוס בלשונו את מי אשלח ומי ילך לנו
מיד ואומר הנני שלחני אמ׳ לו ישעיה בניי סרחנין הן
טרחנין הן אם את מקבל עליך להתבזות וללקות מבניי אתה
הולך בשליחותי ואם לאו אי אתה הולך בשליחותי אמ׳ לו על
מנת כן גוי נתתי למכים ולחיי למורטים ואיני כדיי שאלך
בשליחות אצל בניך...

Cf. also, PK, 16:4.

12. PR, 33, p. 150b.

כיון שראה את מלאכי השרת מקלסים להקדוש ברוך הוא ולא שיתף קילוסו עמהם התחיל מיצר על הדבר ואומר אוי לי כי נדמתי כי איש [וגו'] דברים שלא היה אפשר לראות [ולחיות] ראיתי ולא [מתי] ולא היה לי לשתף קילוסי עם קילוסן של מלאכי השרת שאילולי שיתפתי קילוסי עם קילוסם שלהם הייתי חי וקיים לעולם כמותם היאך היה לי שדממתי אוי לי כי נדמתי.

13. Ibid.

עם [שהוא] עומד ומשתומם על הדבר הוציא דבר יתר מפיו ואמר [כי איש טמא שפתים אנכי] ובתוך עם טמא שפתים אנכי יושב.

14. Ibid.

א"ל הקב"ה אמרת כי איש טמא שפתים אנכי הותרה לך על שהיית שליט בעצמך שמא בבני היית שליט שהיית עומד ואומר עליהם ובתוך עם טמא שפתים מיד נטל את שלו שנ' ויעף אלי אחד מן השרפים ובידו [רצפה במלקחים לקח מעל המזבח] גחלת אין כתב כאן אלא רצפה מהו רצפה אמר ר' שמואל בר נחמן רץ פה שאמר דלטוריא על בני.

See also Canticles R., 1:6 and PR, 11, p. 42b. In these sources, Moses and Elijah along with Isaiah are mentioned as prophets who were punished for speaking critically of Israel.

Essentially the same account of Isaiah's punishment appears in Tanhuma Vayishlach, 2. This source, however, transforms Isaiah's punishment for speaking ill of

Israel into praise for the prophet. After describing Isaiah's slander of Israel and God's displeasure with it, the *Midrash* procedes to comment on Isaiah's punishment. Interpreting the plural *melkahayim* ("tongs") as two pairs of tongs, the *Midrash* states that the angel who was to touch Isaiah's lips with the burning coal burnt himself when he sought to lift the coal by hand from the altar. The angel then took a pair of tongs, but the heat of the coal traveled through the tongs and burnt the angel's hand again. It was only when the angel used a second pair of tongs to grasp the pair holding the coal that the punishment could be inflicted. Yet, despite the extreme heat, Isaiah was in no way harmed when the coal touched his mouth. The *Midrash* then explains that the term *oseh devaro*, "He that performs His will (Joel 2:11)" refers to Isaiah. Translating the term as *osei devaro*, "Those who perform His will", the *Midrash* interprets the verse as follows: "And the Lord lifted forth His voice before His host; For His camp is very great; For the mighty one[s in His camp] are those who do His will." "Those who do His will" are the righteous ones; here, Isaiah. Isaiah the righteous is stronger than the host of angels who populate the camp of the Lord.

15. *TB Baba Bathra*, 14b.

ת"ר סדרן של נביאים יהושע ושופטים שמואל ומלכים ירמיה
ויחזקאל ישעיה ושנים עשר.

16. Ibid.

מכדי ישעיה קדים מירמיה ויחזקאל ליקדמיה לישעיה ברישא
כיון דמלכים סופיה חורבנא וירמיה כוליה חורבנא ויחזקאל
רישיה חורבנא וסיפיה נחמתא וישעיה כוליה נחמתא סמכינן
חורבנא לחורבנא ונחמתא לנחמתא.

17. The unity of the book of Isaiah was never doubted in Talmudic and Midrashic literature.

18. ARN(A), 40, p. 128.

הרואה ספר מלכים בחלום יצפה לגדולה ולעשירות ישעיה
יצפה לנחמה ירמיה ידאג מן הפורענות.

Compare with TB Berakot, 57b where Ezekiel is added: "One who sees the book of Ezekiel in a dream should look forward to wisdom".

19. TB Makkot, 24a.

משה אמר ואבדתם בגוים (Lev. 26:38) בא ישעיה ואמר והיה
ביום ההוא יתקע בשופר גדול (Isa. 27:13).

20. Lamentations R., 1:23.

רבי יהודה ברבי סימון ור' איבו ורבנן אמרי לפי שחטאו
מאל"ף ועד תי"ו מתנחמין מאל"ף ועד תי"ו וכן את מוצא
שכל נבואות קשות שנתנבא ירמיה על ישראל הקדים ישעיה
ורפאן ירמיה אמר איכה ישבה בדד ישעיה אמר ואמרת בלבבך
מי ילד לי את אלה...

"R. Judah the son of R. Simon and R. Aibu...: Since

UMI

Israel sinned from alef to tav, they are comforted from alef to tav. Thus you find that Isaiah provided a [comforting] counterpart to all of the harsh prophecies that Jeremiah prophesied against Israel. Jeremiah said: 'How lonely does the city sit (Lam. 1:1)'; Isaiah said: "Then you shall say in your heart who has begotten me these (Isa. 49:21)'".
Cf. also PR, 29-30 end. pp. 139b-140b.

21. PK, 16:10.

ר' חנינא בר פפא א' אמרו ישראל לישעיה רבינו ישעיה תאמר שלא באתה לנחם אלא לאותו הדור שחרב בית המקדש בימיו א' להם לכל הדורות באתי לנחם אמר אלהיכם אין כתיב כאן אלא יאמר אלהיכם.

22. Ibid.

א"ר סימון אמרו ישראל לישעיה רבינו ישעיה תאמר שכל הדברים הללו מליבך אתה כראש אמר להם אמר אלהיכם אין כתיב כאן אלא יאמר אלהיכם.

23. Ibid., 14:3.

א"ר שמואל בר נחמן כד תימוט בירה בירה שמה וכד תרום קיקלה קיקלה שמה כד תימוט בירה בירה שמה שמעו דבר ה' בית יעקב וכל משפחות...אפילו בירידתן הוא קורא אותן בית ישראל וכד תרום קיקלה קיקלה שמה הן ארץ כשדים זה העם לא היה הלווי לא היה.

"R. Samuel bar Nahman said: When a palace falls into ruin, people still call it a palace; but when a dung-heap is raised to eminence, people keep on calling it a dungheap. When a palace falls into ruin, people still call it a palace--'Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob...(Jer. 2:4)'. Even as Israel are falling into ruin, God still calls them "house of Israel". But when a dungheap is raised to eminence, people keep on calling it a dungheap--'Behold, the land of the Chaldeans--this is the nation that was nothing (Isa. 23:13)'. [Despite its present eminence], let it still be called nothing".

24. "Mesopotamia", Encyclopedia Judaica, XVI, 1512-1514.

25. Tanhuma Shelah, 13.

בא וראה מה בין צדיקים לרשעים בענין שנא' ושבתם וראיתם בין וגו' מלה"ד למטרוניתא שהיה לה שפחה והלך בעלה למדינת הים כל הלילה היתה אומרת שפחתה לאותה מטרונא אני נאה ממך והמלך אוהב אותי יותר ממך אמרה לה אותה מטרוניתא יבא הבקר תדע מי נאה או מי שאוהב המלך אף כך או"ה אומרים לישראל אנחנו מעשינו יפין ובנו חפץ הקב"ה לכך אמר ישעיה יבא הבקר ונדע במי חפץ הקב"ה שנא' אמר שומר אתא בוקר וגם לילה יבא העולם הבא שנקראת בקר ואנו יודעים שנא' ושבתם וראיתם בין צדיק לרשע.

26. Ibid., Tissa, 24.

וכי יאמרו אליכם דרשו אל האובות ואל הידעונים המצפצפים והמהגים הלא עם אל אלהיו ידרוש בעד החיים אל המתים מי מתנבא להם הפסוק הזה ישעיה בן אמוץ אמר להם לישראל אם יאמרו לכם האומות עשו לכם ע"ז ודרשו אל האובות ואל הידעונים כמותנו אמרו להם שאלו אתם באלהיכם ואנו באלהינו

הלא עם אל אלהיו ידרוש.

"And when they shall say to you: 'Seek the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and that mutter; should not a people seek their God on behalf of the living unto the dead (Isa. 8:19)'. Who prophesied this verse to them? Isaiah told Israel: If the nations say to you, 'practice idolatry and seek the ghosts and familiar spirits as we do', say to them, 'you may seek your god, but we will seek ours, should not a people seek its own God'".

27. Leviticus R., 10:2.

אמר לו ישעיה אהבת צדק אהבת לצדק את בניי ותשנא רשע
ששנאת לחייבן...מהו מחביריך אמ׳ לו חייך שכל הנביאים קיבלו
נביאות נביא מן נביא ויאצל מן הרוח אשר עליו...אבל אתה
מפי הקב"ה רוח ה׳ אלהים עלי יען משח ה׳ אותי. (Isa. 61:1)

28. Ibid.

חייך שכל הנביאים מתנבאים נבואות פשוטות ואתה נחמות
כפולות עורי עורי (Isa. 52:1) התעוררי התעוררי (Isa. 51:17)
שוש אשיש (Isa. 61:10) אנכי אנכי הוא מנחמכם
(Isa. 51:12) נחמו נחמו עמי (Isa. 40:1)

29. Tanhuma Devarim, 1.

...וכל נחמות שאמר ישעיה...כפלים הם לפי שלקחה מיד ה׳
כפלים בכל חטאתיה לפיכך נחומיה כלשון כפלים נחמו נחמו
עמי אנכי אנכי הוא מנחמכם עורי עורי התעוררי התעוררי
שוש אשיש...

30. Midrash Psalms, 90:4.

כל הנביאים שהיו מתנבאים לא היו יודעין מה היו מתנבאין
אלא משה וישעיה הם היו יודעין...אמר ר' יהושע הכהן בר
נחמיה אף אליהו היה מתנבא והיה יודע...

31. Deuteronomy R., 2:3.

...ואין לך גדול בנביאים ממשה וישעיה ושניהם לא באו אלא
בתחנונים...

32. PR, 26, p. 129a.

The others are Adam, Jacob, and Jeremiah.

הראשון הוא היה אדם הראשון הה"ד וייצר ה' אלהים את האדם
וגו' (Gen. 2:7) השני הוא היה [יעקב] דכתב ביה [כה
אמר ה'] בוראך יעקב ויוצרך ישראל וגו' (Isa. 43:1)
השלישי [הוא היה ישעיה דכתיב ועתה אמר ה' יצרי מבטן
(Isa. 49:5) הרביעי] הוא היה ירמיה דכתב בטרם אצרך
בבטן ידעתיך וגו' (Jer. 1:5).

33. Midrash Psalms, 9:7.

The list of those born circumcised includes: Adam, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Shem, Terah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah.

...זה אחד מי"ג שנולדו מהולים ואלו הן אדם הראשון שת
חנוך נח שם תרח יעקב יוסף משה שמואל דוד ישעיה ירמיה...

Cf. also ARN(A), 2, p. 12, and Tanhuma Noah, 5.

34. Ibid., 22:2.

...והיה אור ישראל לאש וקדושו ללהבה אור ישראל זה
חזקיהו וקדושו ללהבה זה ישעיה...

"And the light of Israel shall be for a fire and His holy one for a flame (Isa. 10:17)'--the 'light of

Israel' refers to Hezekiah and 'His holy one' refers to Isaiah".

35. TB Makkot, 24a.

בא ישעיה והעמידן על שש דכתיב הולך צדקות ודובר מישרים.

"Isaiah came and reduced them to six: 'He that walks righteously and speaks uprightly; he that despises the gain of oppression; he that shakes his hands from holding bribes; he that stops his ears from hearing of blood; and he that shuts his eyes from looking upon evil (Isa. 33:15)'".

36. Lamentations R., 1:1.

א"ר לוי משל למטרונה שהיו לה שלשה שושבינין אחד ראה
אותה בשלותה ואחד ראה אותה בפחזותה ואחד ראה אותה
בניוולה כך משה ראה את ישראל בכבודם ושלותם ואמר איכה
אשא לבדי טרחכם (Deut. 1:12) ישעיה ראה אותם בפחזותם
ואמר איכה היתה לזונה (Isa. 1:21) ירמיה ראה אותם
בניוולם ואמר איכה ישבה (Lam. 1:1).

37. Ibid., proem 1.

רבי אבא בר כהנא פתח צהלי קולך בת גלים (Isa. 10:30)
אמר ישעיה לישראל עד שאתם אומרים שירים ומזמורים לפני
עבודת כוכבים צהלי קולך בדברי תורה צהלי קולך בבתי
כנסיות.

38. Leviticus R., 16:1

והיה הק׳ או׳ לירמיהו מה אילו עושות כן יקומו יגלו מיכן
והיה ירמיה או׳ להן עשו תשובה עד שלא יבואו שונאים.

"God said to Jeremiah: Because these [haughty women]

have acted so they will be exiled from here. Jeremiah said to them: Repent before the enemy comes".
M. Margaliot notes the variant texts that read Isaiah for Jeremiah.

39. TB Hagigah, 14a.

כי אתא רב דימי אמר שמונה עשרה קללות קילל ישעיה את
ישראל ולא נתקררה דעתו עד שאמר להם המקרא הזה ירהבו
הנער בזקן והנקלה בנכבד (Isa. 3:5) שמונה עשרה קללות
מאי ניהו דכתיב כי הנה האדון ה' צבאות מסיר מירושלים
ומיהודה משען ומשענה...ולא נתקררה דעתו עד שאמר להם
ירהבו הנער בזקן והנקלה בנכבד אלו בני אדם שמנוערין
מן המצות ירהבו במי שממולא במצות כרמון והנקלה בכבוד
יבא מי שחמורות דומות בקלות וירהבו במי שקלות דומות
עליו כחמורות.

40. Tanhuma (Buber) Vayeze, 14, p. 153.

אמר לו ישעיה שאל לך אות מעם ה' אלהיך העמק שאלה שיחיו
המתים או שיעלה קרח משאל או הגבה למעלה תבקש שירד
אליהו מן השמים א"ל יודע אני שיש בו כח לעשות אבל איני
רוצה שיתקדש שם שמים על ידי.

41. TB Sanhedrin, 104a.

ומפני מה לא מנו את אחז...רב יוסף אמר מפני שהיה לו
בשת פנים מישעיהו שנאמר ויאמר ה' אל ישעיהו צא נא
לקראת אחז אתה ושאר ישוב בנך אל קצה תעלת הברכה
העליונה אל מסלת שדה כובס מאי כובס איכא דאמרי דכבשינהו
לאפיה וחלף...

"Why did they not include Ahaz?...R. Joseph said: Because he humbled himself before Isaiah, as it is written, "And God said to Isaiah, Go to meet Ahaz, you and Shear-jashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the road of the fuller's [kobes] field (Isa. 7:3)'. What is the meaning of kobes? Some say: he hid [connecting kobes with kobesh, "to bend down, suppress"] his face [in shame] and fled...".

42. Ibid., 26a.

שבנא הוה דריש בתליסר רבוותא חזקיה הוה דריש בחד סר
רבוותא כי אתא סנחריב וצר עלה דירושלים כתב שבנא פתקא
שדא בגירא שבנא וסיעתו השלימו חזקיה וסיעתו לא השלימו
...הוה קא מסתפי חזקיה אמר דילמא חס ושלום נטיה דעתיה
דקוב"ה בתר רובא כיון דרובא מיססרי אינהו נמי מימסרי
בא נביא ואמר לו לא תאמרון קשר לכל אשר יאמר העם הזה
קשר כלומר קשר רשעים הוא וקשר רשעים אינו מן המנין.

"Shebna expounded the law before thirteen thousand, and Hezekiah only before eleven thousand. When Sennacherib came and beseiged Jerusalem, Shebna wrote a note which he shot on an arrow [saying]: Shebna and his followers are willing to make peace; Hezekiah and his followers are not...Hezekiah became afraid and said: Perhaps God forbid, the Holy One, blessed be He agrees with the majority; since they wish to surrender, we also should surrender. The prophet came and said to him: 'Do not say confederacy concerning all of whom this people says confederacy

(Isa. 8:12)'; it is a confederacy of the wicked, and as such does not count". The Talmud goes on to relate that when Shebna arrogantly sought to procure a burial place among the sepulchres of the house of David, Isaiah angrily confronted him and told him that instead of finding final rest in the royal sepulchre he would die in exile. Ibid.

43. Midrash Psalms, 22:2.

בשעה שהלך לירושלים היו ישעיהו וחזקיהו יושבין בבית
המקדש ויצאה אש מבין שניהם וליהטה אותו ואוכלוסיו.

The Midrash is based on Isa. 10:17, "The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and His holy one for a flame; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day". The "light of Israel" refers to Hezekiah; "His holy one" is Isaiah; "it shall burn" means Sennacherib; "and devour his thorns and his briers" refers to Sennacherib's army. Cf. also, Leviticus R., 28:4, which portrays Hezekiah and Isaiah leading their followers in trampling upon the Assyrian army.

44. Canticles R., 4:19.

ראוי היה חזקיהו לומר שירה על מפלת סנחריב דכתיב ולא
בגמול עליו השיב חזקיה למה כי גבה לבו...אתא ישעיה
לגביהון דחזקיהו וסיעתו אמר לון זמרו ה' ארון ליה למה
כי גאות עשה...אמר ר' אבא בר כהנא אמר חזקיהו תורה שאני
עוסק בה מכפרת על השירה א"ר לוי אמר חזקיהו מה אנו
צריכין לומר נסיו וגבורותיו של הקב"ה כבר מודעת זאת

מסוף העולם ועד סופו...

45. TB Berakot, 10a.

אמר רב המנונא מאי דכתיב מי כהחכם ומי יודע פשר דבר
(Eccl. 8:1) מי כהקדוש ברוך הוא שיודע לעשות פשרה בין
שני צדיקים בין חזקיהו לישעיהו חזקיהו אמר ליתי ישעיה
גבאי...ישעיהו אמר ליתי חזקיהו גבאי...מה עשה הקב"ה
הביא יסורים על חזקיהו ואמר לו לישעיהו לך ובקר את
החולה שנאמר בימים ההם חלה חזקיהו למות ויבא אליו
ישעיהו בן אמוץ הנביא ויאמר אליו כה אמר ה׳ צו לביתך
כי מת אתה ולא תחיה וגו׳.

The legend is based on II Kings 20:1-11 and Isa. 38:1-8. M. Aberbach has suggested to me orally that this legend as well as a similar one concerning Jephthah and Phinehas may be allusions to contemporary tensions between the Nasi [Patriarch] and some of the sages. For the legend about Jephtah and Phinehas, cf. Genesis R., 60:3. Cf. also Gedaliah Allon, Toledot ha-Yehudim be-Erez Yisrael bi-Tekufat ha-Mishnah ve-ha-Talmud (Tel Aviv: 1958), I, pp. 197 ff.
Hezekiah's pride is also alluded to in Numbers R., 20:6 which refers to the king as a "vessel full of urine". The reason for this unflattering appellation is that Hezekiah pridefully boasted of the gift that he had received from Merodach-baladan upon his recovery from his illness.

46. TB Berakot, 10a.

אמר ליה מאי כולי האי אמר ליה משום דלא עסקת בפרית ורביה
א"ל משום דחזאי לי ברוח הקדש דנפקי מינאי בנין דלא מעלו
א"ל בהדי כבשי דרחמנא למה לך מאי דמפקדת איבעי לך למעבד
ומה דניחא קמיה קודשא בריך הוא לעביד אמר ליה השתא הב
לי ברתך אפשר דגרמא זכותא דידי ודידך ונפקי מנאי בנין
דמעלו א"ל כבר נגזרה עליך גזירה א"ל בן אמוץ כלה נבואתך
וצא כך מקובלני מבית אבי אבא אפילו חרב חדה מונחת על
צוארו של אדם אל ימנע עצמו מן הרחמים.

Cf. also TY Sanhedrin, 10, 2, 28c. Cf. also below, footnote 52.

47. Ecclesistes R., 5:4.

...אמר ישעיהו לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע בתחלה אמרת לי כן
ועכשיו אתה אומר לי כן ואיך אלך ואומר כן אמר לו ענותן
הוא ומקבל ממך ולא עוד אלא עדיין לא יצא הדיבור...

Cf. also, TY Sanhedrin, 10, 2, 28c.

48. The verse, "And it came to pass, before Isaiah was gone out of the inner court of the city...(II Kings 20:4)" is interpreted as meaning before Isaiah and his message had reached the public places of the city. Isaiah's concern about appearing to be a liar, a "false prophet", is similar to that of Jonah. Cf. Adele Berlin, "A Rejoinder to John A. Miles Jr. With Some Observations on the Nature of Prophecy" (forthcoming article in Jewish Quarterly Review). Cf. also the discussion below, pp. 251-258.

49. See above, pp. 29-30.

50. The king clearly perceived these prophetic failings and severely reprimanded Isaiah for them. *Ecclesiastes R.*, 5:4.

א"ל חזקיה לישעיה ישעיה בנוהג שבעולם אדם הולך לבקר את
החולה אומר לו מן השמים ירחמו עליך...ואתה אומר לי צו
לביתך כי מת אתה ולא תחיה.

"Hezekiah said to Isaiah: Isaiah, when a person visits someone who is ill, it is customary for him to say, 'May God be merciful to you'...Yet, you say to me, 'Set your house in order for you shall die and not live (II Kings 20:1)'".

51. *TB Erubin*, 26a.

אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר ר׳ יוחנן מלמד שחלה חזקיה והלך
ישעיהו והושיב ישיבה על פתחו מכאן לת"ח שחלה שמושיבין
ישיבה על פתחו.

The *Talmud*, however, adds its own rejoinder that perhaps this might not be such a good idea as a group of students engaged in study at the door of a house might arouse the curiosity of the Angel of Death. *Ibid*.

52. According to some manuscripts of *TB Berakot*, 10b, Isaiah's daughter married Hezekiah and they gave birth to Manasseh. Raphael Rabbinowicz, *Dikduke Sopherim* (Jerusalem: 1960), I, p. 43.

53. The most detailed of the Talmudic sources is *TB Yebamoth*, 49b. A shorter and somewhat modified version of the story appears in *TY Sanhedrin*, 10,2,28c.

TB Sanhedrin, 103b contains only the brief notice:

וגם דם נקי שפך מנשה הרבה מאד עד אשר מלא את ירושלים
פה לפה לבד מחטאתו אשר החטיא את יהודה לעשות הרע בעיני
ה' הכא תרגימו שהרג ישעיה.

"Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord II Kings 21:16)'--here [in Babylonia] they explained this as meaning he [Manasseh] killed Isaiah".

The Midrashic source is PR, 4, p. 14a.

54. The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, ed. R.H. Charles, (Oxford: 1913), II, pp. 155-162.

55. L. Ginzberg writes that the name Belchira is a compound of baal, ("master, owner") and hara, ("excrement"). Legends, VI, p. 373, n. 101. Cf. also R.H. Charles, Apocrypha, II, p. 160.

56. R.H. Charles, Apocrypha, II, p. 162.

57. TB Yebamoth, 49b.

תני שמעון בן עזאי אומר מצאתי מגלת יוחסין בירושלים
...וכתוב בה מנשה הרג את ישעיה.

58. Ibid.

אמר רבא מידן דיניה וקטליה אמר ליה משה רבך אמר כי לא
יראני האדם וחי ואת אמרת ואראה את ה' יושב על כסא רם
ונשא משה רבך אמר מי כה' אלהינו בכל קראנו אליו ואת
אמרת דרשו ה' בהמצאו משה רבך אמר את מספר ימיך אמלא ואת

אמרת והוספתי על ימיך חמש עשרה שנה אמר ישעיה ידענא ביה
דלא מקבל מה דאימא ליה ואי אימא ליה אישוייה מזיד אמר
שם איבלע בארזא אתיוה לארזא ונסרוה כי מטא להדי פומא
נח נפשיה משום דאמר ובתוך עם טמא שפתים אנכי יושב.

59. That Manasseh, despite his wickedness, was learned in the Torah is attested to in TB Sanhedrin, 103b where it says that he interpreted Leviticus in fifty-five different ways. Cf. also TB Sanhedrin, 102b which states that Manasseh taught R. Ashi the law concerning which part of the bread was to be used for reciting the blessing over bread.

60. M. Aberbach, "Hinuch le-Ahavat Yisrael".

61. TB Yebamoth, 49b-50a.

62. TY Sanhedrin, 10, 2, 28c.

כד דקם מנשה הוה פרי חורי ישעיה בעי מיקטלוניה והוא
ערק מן קדומיי ערק לארזא ובלעיה ארזאי חסר ציצתה דגולתיה
אתון ואמרין קדומי אמר לון אזלון ונסרון ארזא ונסרו
לארזא ואיתחמי דמא נגד.

"When Manasseh became king Isaiah fled to a cave. Manasseh pursued him in order to kill him. Isaiah fled from him and hid in a cedar tree which swallowed him up. However, the fringes of his garment hung out. They came and said: We have found him. He [Manasseh] said to them: Go and saw the cedar tree. They sawed the cedar tree and blood appeared".

L. Ginzberg suggests that this form of the legend is incomplete, and proposes that it originally contained a statement that Isaiah once neglected to fulfill the commandment of zizith and was punished by having his hiding place revealed by the zizith. L. Ginzberg, Legends, VI, p. 374, n. 103.

63. PR, 4, p. 14a.

...השמים כסאי והארץ הדום רגלי בסוף נבואתו של ישעיה
נתנבא הפסוק הזה ואימתי נתנבא אותו בימי מנשה שכיון
שהכניס מנשה את הצלם להיכל התחיל מתנבא ישעיה לישראל
ואמר להם מה אתם מתגאים לי בבית הזה שבניתם לי העליונים
והתחתונים אינם מחזיקים כבודי והבית הזה שבניתם לי אני
צריך איזה בית אשר תבנו לי הרי נבוכדנצר עולה ומחריב
אותו ומגלה אתכם מיד כעס עליו מנשה ואמר להם תפשוהו
רצו אחריו לתופשו ברח מפניהם פערה החרובית עצמה ובלעה
אותו אמר ר' יצחק בר חנינא בר פפא בר יצחק והוא מביא
חרשים ונוסר את החרובית והיה הדם שותת הרא הוא דכתיב
וגם דם נקי שפך מנשה [הרבה מאד] עד אשר מלא את ירושלים
פה לפה איפשר לדבר זה אלא שהרג את ישעיה [שהיה שקול
כמשה] שנדבר עמו [פה אל פה]...

64. The earliest examples of this literature are the stories of Eleazar in 11 Maccabees 7 and Hannah and her seven sons in 11 Maccabees 6:18-31. Cf. "Kiddush Hashem: Historical Aspects", Encyclopedia Judaica, X, 981-986.

65. Otto Eissfeldt, The Old Testament (New York: 1965), p. 609. On the other hand, D. Flusser believes that the Martyrdom of Isaiah is of Qumran origin, and that it is an attempt on the part of those who moved to Damascus to justify their move. Cf. David Flusser, "The Apocryphal Book of Ascensio Isaiah and the Dead Sea Sect", Israel Exploration Journal, III (1953), pp. 30-47.

66. During the period of the Crusades when Jewish communities sought to rally courage to commit suicide rather than convert, the examples of Hannah and her seven sons and of R. Akiba were cited. Cf. A. Habermann, Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz Ve-Zarefat (Jerusalem: 1946), pp. 31, 34, 49, 73, 102, 104.

67. In his study, "Martyr and Prophet", Harry Fischel traces the connection between martyr and prophet back to Biblical writings. He cites the fate of Micaiah, Elijah, Amos, and Jeremiah to show that prophets suffered for their beliefs and actions. Rabbinic literature elaborated on this theme. By the first century CE, it was an accepted Jewish teaching that prophets had to suffer and/or undergo actual martyrdom. According to Fischel, there are general as well as specifically Jewish causes for the spread of this belief. He cites the need to be a "witness" to some absolute truth in an age of materialism and

ethical and philosophic relativism. In addition, some explanation or glorification of suffering in an age of suffering filled an obvious need. In a more specifically Jewish context, the glorification of martyrs who gained Paradise by sacrificing their lives for duty was a product of an age which saw a growing Jewish belief in an after-life and an increasing stress on duty.

Fischel notes two distinct lines in the development of the prophet-martyr type. In the first, the prophet is killed by his own people. Fischel sees in these legends an example of the Rabbinic tendency towards self-accusation for didactic purposes. They also served as a parallel for the Pharisaic leaders who suffered under Saduccean rule and at the hands of some Hasmonean kings.

The second line of development of the prophet-martyr theme is where non-Jewish rulers slay the martyr. Harry Fischel, "Martyr and Prophet", Jewish Quarterly Review XXXVII, (1946, 1947), 265ff.

Fischel's definition of martyrdom is very broad. In addition to dying for one's beliefs, it includes suffering vilification and physical harm without being killed. Under a narrower definition of martyrdom, i.e., one who is killed because he refuses to change his beliefs, only six prophets qualify as martyrs according to the Rabbis. These are: Hur, Shemiah, Ahijah the Shilonite, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Zechariah. Cf. L. Ginzberg, Legends, VI, p. 396, n. 30. There is some confusion about Zechariah. He is the priest mentioned in II Chron. 24:20-22. He is, however, occasionally confused with the prophet of the same name. Cf. "Zechariah", Encyclopedia Judaica, XVI, p. 952. See sources cited there. Their own people martyred each of these prophets.

68. For a description of the increasingly sympathetic attitude of medieval Jewish religious authorities in Christian Europe towards martyrdom, cf. Jacob Katz, Exclusiveness and Tolerance (London: 1961), pp. 82-92.

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CHAPTER IV

EZEKIEL--PROPHET OF REBIRTH

EZEKIEL'S CANONIZATION

The prophet Ezekiel gave to Israel its most vivid and forceful message of salvation--the bodily revival of the exiled people and its return to the Holy Land. There it would see Jerusalem restored and the Temple rebuilt. These visions (Ez. 37;40-48) would seem to be sufficient to have assured Ezekiel an honored place in the sacred scriptures of Israel. That, however, is not the case.

Some Rabbis raised strong objections against the book of Ezekiel. Its contradiction of certain points in the Torah was too blatant for the Rabbis to ignore. The Talmud contains a tradition in the name of the third century Amora Rav that, had it not been for the energetic efforts of the first century sage, Hananiah ben Hezekiah, the book of Ezekiel would have been "hidden away" because of the contradictions that exist between it and the Torah. The Rabbis supplied Hananiah with a large amount of oil for light and he ascended to his attic study where he was able, at least to his own satisfaction, to reconcile the contradictions.[1] Unfortunately no trace of the details of Hananiah's efforts remain.[2]

The term "hidden away" (ganuz) which is used in

UMI

reference to several other Biblical books as well as Ezekiel, has been the subject of varied interpretations. M. Jastrow in his Talmudic dictionary defines it as to "suppress" with the meaning to declare uncanonical.[3] Thus, for Jastrow, the dispute over the book of Ezekiel concerns the acceptability of the book into the canon of Scripture.

Other scholars, however, disagree with this definition of *ganuz*. G.F. Moore translates the term as "store away in safe-keeping".[4] He notes that *ganuz* is used only of things that have intrinsic value or are of a sacred character. Accordingly, Hananiah was not battling to protect the canonicity of Ezekiel. Rather he was fighting the attempt to withdraw the book from public use lest the unlearned be confused by its contradictions of the Torah. Moore's explanation is accepted by a number of modern Jewish Biblical scholars.[5]

The Tannaitic discussions on the fitness of certain books to be accepted into the Biblical canon provide further proof for Moore's interpretation. The third chapter of the Mishnaic treatise *Yadaim* contains a dispute going at least as far back as the second century CE over the canonicity of Ecclesiastes and Canticles.[6] No mention, however, is made of Ezekiel. Nor is Ezekiel mentioned in the Talmudic discussion over the canonicity of these books and the questions that arose concerning Esther and Proverbs.[7]

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There is, however, one Rabbinic tradition that may reflect difficulty that the book of Ezekiel experienced in gaining canonical legitimacy. A Talmudic statement declares that Hezekiah and his associates wrote the books of Isaiah, Proverbs, Canticles and Ecclesiastes, and that the members of the Great Assembly wrote Ezekiel, the Twelve, Daniel, and Esther.[8] L. Ginzburg suggests that Hezekiah and his associates are the same as the Great Assembly.[9] According to this tradition, the Great Assembly edited a number of books whose canonicity was questioned for one reason or another.[10]

RABBINIC TREATMENT OF THE DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN EZEKIEL AND THE TORAH

The Talmudic discussions of the contradictions between Ezekiel and the Torah reflect an attempt to reconcile the two sources. Most of the discrepancies deal with Temple law as outlined in the last chapters of Ezekiel. Thus, in detailing the sacrifice for the New Moon, Ezekiel requires only one bullock whereas the Torah specifies two. The *Talmud* reconciles the two sources by explaining that the law requires two bullocks, and the verse in Ezekiel adds that if two bullocks are unavailable, at least one must be brought. Similarly, while Ezekiel requires six lambs in addition to the bullock, the Torah specifies seven. Here too, according to the *Talmud*, the law is in accordance with the specifications of the Torah, while the verse in Ezekiel teaches the minimum number of lambs necessary for the ceremony to be effective.[11]

Despite this tendency to iron out differences between Ezekiel and the Torah, some contradictions defied reconciliation. R. Johanan declared that Ezekiel's prescription of a sin-offering instead of the Torah-mandated burnt-offering for the New Moon and his seeming limitation to the priesthood of the prohibition against eating of a beast or fowl that had died naturally or had been torn would have to await Elijah's future eludication.[12]

While the source of law for the Rabbis was the Torah, and while contradictions between Ezekiel and the Torah were reconciled by saying that Ezekiel added a new element to the law as stated in the Torah, there were some Amoraim who derived certain laws of Temple ritual from Ezekiel. The late third century Amora, Rav Hisda, taught that the source for the law prohibiting an uncircumcised priest from entering the Temple was Ezekiel, 44:9, while Ezekiel, 44:7 was the basis for the law that if an uncircumcised priest did enter the Temple, the service would be invalidated.[13] The early fifth century Amora, Rabina, who was instrumental in the redaction of the _Babylonian Talmud_, also derived certain details of Temple law from Ezekiel. According to him, the regulation that the priestly garments be of linen is based on Ezekiel, 44:18.[14] The

Palestinian Amora, R. Simeon ben Pazzi, taught that the law requiring that a marker be placed by a graveside was based on Ezekiel, 39:15.[15] However, the view that laws could be derived from Ezekiel did not go unchallenged. Rabina's contemporary, Rav Ashi, maintained that those laws which Rabina based on Ezekiel were actually ancient traditions in existence long before the prophet's time.[16]

While most of the discrepancies between Ezekiel and the Torah dealt with matters of Temple law, there was one significant difference in doctrine. There was a clear divergence on the question of inherited sin between Exodus, 20:5, and Ezekiel's declaration that each man is responsible for his own sin (Ezek. 18:20). Yet, the Rabbis did not attempt to bridge this difference. Instead, they said that Ezekiel's teaching overrode that of Moses: "Moses said: '[God,] visiting the guilt of the fathers upon the children (Ex. 20:5)'; Ezekiel came and overrode this: 'The soul that sins shall die (Ezek. 18:20)'."[17] There was a greater flexibility in the area of doctrine. Not all doctrinal differences had to be reconciled with the Torah. However, in the realm of law the Torah was supreme, and divergences from it were not considered legitimate.

EZEKIEL'S MERKABAH VISION: LIMITATIONS ON STUDY

In addition to the discrepancies that existed between Ezekiel and the Torah, some of the Rabbis found

Ezekiel's merkabah vision (Ez. 1) objectionable, and they sought to limit its usage in the Synagogue. The Mishnah records a Tannaitic dispute over whether or not the first chapter of Ezekiel should be read as a haftarah (section from prophetic literature read on Sabbaths and Festivals following the Torah reading).[18] Another Tannaitic view maintains that the vision may be read publicly but not translated into the Aramaic vernacular.[19] These objections reflect an attempt to discourage esoteric speculation.

For the same reason, the Rabbis also sought to restrict the study of Ezekiel's merkabah vision. The Mishnah lists three Biblical sections that may be expounded only in small groups. These sections deal with delicate matters, and the Rabbis feared that learned discussion of them in large groups of people would increase the chances of misunderstanding and error. The sexual offenses listed in Leviticus 18 and 20 (the arayot) may be expounded before a group no larger than two, and the first chapter of Genesis before only one person. The most severe limitation fell on Ezekiel's merkabah vision which may be explained before only one person, and then only if he is wise and discerning.[20] The Tosephta contains the same tradition, and mentions a number of scholars who were wise and discerning enough to have the merkabah vision taught in their presence.[21]

The Talmud adds other qualifications for those who would study the merkabah. R. Eleazar required maturity in years, even for a scholar.[22] R. Zera declared that the merkabah vision should not be taught and that even the chapter headings could be expounded only to the head of the court or to a person who possessed a very reverential and serious nature. A stricter opinion held that the person must be both the head of a court and of a reverential and serious disposition.[23] R. Joseph would not teach the merkabah even to the scholars of Pumbeditha.[24] R. Ammi was of the opinion that the mysteries of the Torah could be communicated only to one who possessed the following attributes: 1) fifty years of age; 2) expertise in the Torah; 3) character so outstanding that for his sake his entire generation is granted favour; 4) skill in intercalating the years and fixing the months; 5) such wisdom as to enlighten his teachers and cause all to cease talking when he begins his discourse, and 6) the ability to draw conclusions on the basis of information imparted to him, and worthiness to have the secrets of the Torah imparted to him in a whisper.[25]

Not only did the Rabbis discourage widespread investigation of the merkabah vision, but they also warned against the dangers involved in such investigation. The Tosephta and the Babylonian Talmud relate the story of four Tannaim who entered Paradise while still alive. Of these, only R. Akiba emerged unscathed:

UMI

> Our Rabbis taught: Four men entered Paradise--Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma, Aher and R. Akiba. R. Akiba said to them: when you arrive at the stones of pure marble, do not say 'water, water', for it is said, "He that speaks falsehood will not be established before Me (Ps. 101:7)". Ben Azzai looked and died. Of him Scripture says: "The death of His saints is precious in the sight of the Lord (Ps. 116:15)". Ben Zoma looked and lost his mind. Of him Scripture says: "Have you found honey? Eat as much as is sufficient for you, lest you be filled with it and vomit it (Prov. 25:16)". Aher mutilated the shoots. R. Akiba departed unhurt.[26]

The _Talmud_ cites other examples of people who suffered injury through their study of the _merkabah_ vision:

> There was once a child who was reading at his teacher's house the Book of Ezekiel, and he apprehended what _Hashmal_ was, whereupon a fire went forth from _Hashmal_ and consumed him.[27]

The danger of consumption by fire faced by those in esoteric speculation on the _merkabah_ can also be seen in the Talmudic version of the incident cited above from the _Tosephta_ concerning R. Johanan b. Zakkai and R. Eleazar b. Arakh. The latter was an adept student and successfully expounded the _merkabah_ vision without suffering harm. Upon the completion of his discourse, however, fire descended from heaven and consumed all of the trees in the surrounding field. An angel declared from the midst of the flames that R. Eleazar had indeed expounded the _merkabah_.[28] While the flames did not harm R. Eleazar, they apparently represented a physical symbol of the spiritual dangers inherent in esoteric _merkabah_ speculation.

UMI

RABBINIC COMMENTS DENIGRATING THE
MERKABAH VISION

Many Rabbinic comments on Ezekiel's merkabah vision manifest a tendency to lessen its extraordinary nature. Thus, according to R. Jeremiah b. Elazar, the opening of the heavens for Ezekiel was one of the miracles that God had already arranged with nature at the time of creation.[29]

There is, moreover, in Rabbinic sources an attempt to deflate the uniqueness of Ezekiel's vision. The Amora Raba declared that Isaiah had experienced the same vision as Ezekiel.[30] The Talmud even tries to reconcile the contradictions in the descriptions of the two visions. Isaiah describes the seraphim that he saw as having six wings whereas the hayyoth in Ezekiel's vision had only four. The Talmud explains that with the destruction of the Temple, God reduced the number of wings on the heavenly creatures.[31]

However, the most striking manner in which the Rabbis diminished the importance of Ezekiel's vision was in their assertion that the maid-servants of Israel saw more of the divine revelation at the Red Sea than did Ezekiel, Isaiah or any of the other prophets. All Israel saw God reveal Himself himself at the Red Sea while most prophets never saw God Himself, and even Isaiah and Ezekiel did not see God except in the midst of His heavenly court:

UMI

> "'This is my God and I will glorify Him (Ex. 15:2)'. R. Eliezer says: Whence can you say that a maidservant saw at the sea what Isaiah and Ezekiel and all the prophets never saw? It says about them: 'And by the ministry of the prophets have I used similitudes (Hos. 12:11)'. And it is also written: "The heavens were opened and I saw visions of God (Ezek. 1:1)". A parable to illustrate the point: A human king enters a province surrounded by a circle of guards. His lieutenants stand to the right and to the left of him; his soldiers are in front of him and behind him. All the people ask, "Which one is the king?" because he is human like those who surround him. But, when the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself at the sea, no one had to ask: "Which one is the king?" But as soon as they saw Him they recognized Him, and they all opened their mouths and said: 'This is my God and I will glorify Him'".[32]

Other Tannaitic sources attest to the fact that Israel saw God at the Red Sea. A statement in Siphre commenting on Deut. 33:2, "and He came from the midst of the multitude of holy ones", makes a word play on ata, "he came", and reads it as ot hu, "He is preeminent". God was preeminent among the host of holy ones, and when He appeared at the Red Sea, Israel immediately recognized him.[33]

Moreover, God revealed Himself to Israel at another crucial moment in their history, at Mt. Sinai. A statement in the Mekilta informs us:

> At the sea He appeared to them as a mighty hero doing battle, as it is said: "The Lord is a man of war (Ex. 15:3)". At Sinai, He appeared to them as an old man full of mercy, as it is said "And they saw the God of Israel (Ex. 24:10)".[34]

The Midrash Tanhuma contains a similar tradition. In a comment on the verse, "I am the Lord your God (Ex. 20:2)", the Midrash declares that God appeared to Israel as a warrior at the Red Sea and as a teacher instructing Torah at Mt. Sinai. It also tells of two other appearances of God to the people of Israel. One, during the days of Solomon when He appeared as a youth, and the other in the time of Daniel when He took on the guise of an old man. R. Hiyya bar Abba adds the explanation that the different forms in which God appeared were in accordance with the requirements of the given situation. He appeared as a warrior at the Red Sea in order to fight for Israel against its foes; at Sinai He wanted to instruct Israel in the Torah, and therefore, looked like a teacher; in Daniel's day (when, according to Rabbinic tradition, the Men of the Great Assembly were the ruling body among Palestinian Jews), He revealed Himself as an old man as it is seemly that an elder should expound Torah; as a youth in the days of Solomon, in accordance with the verse in Canticles, "His appearance is as majestic as the Lebanon, as stately as the cedars (Cant. 5:15)".[35]

Each of the four above-cited sources emphasizes God's revelation of Himself to the entire people of Israel. The Tanhuma quotation even transforms Daniel's individual revelation into a national one. These Aggadic statements appear to be making two important points. First, the most significant revelations of God occur when He appears before the whole people. Second, the most frequently mentioned revelations of God, namely His appearance at the Red Sea and at Mt. Sinai, are connected with important events in the history of Israel. These sources indicate that God's most significant revelations of Himself occur when He intervenes actively and publicly in the historical destiny of Israel rather than when He appears to specific individuals in ecstatic visions.[36]

A still further Rabbinic diminution of Ezekiel's vision is contained in traditions that say that Israel not only saw God at the Red Sea and at Mt. Sinai, but also saw his chariot (merkabah). R. Judan, in describing God's battle against the armies of Pharoah at the Red Sea, declared that God loosened the Egyptians from between His chariot wheels and threw them into the sea.[37] This statement is followed by a remark by R. Hanina bar Papa on the nature of the divine chariot:

> When a human being rides, he rides on something that carries him, something tangible; but not so the Holy One, blessed be He; He carries His chariot and rides on something which is not tangible, as it is written, 'And He rode upon a cherub and it did fly; yea, He did swoop down upon the wings of the wind (Ps. 18:11)'.[38]

The appearance of God's chariot at Sinai was even more striking, for there Israel saw a multitude of chariots. An interpretation of the verse: "The chariots of God are myriads, thousands of angels; the Lord is among them: it is Sinai in holiness (Ps. 68:18)", states that twenty-two thousand chariots descended on Mt. Sinai with God. Each chariot was like the chariot that Ezekiel saw.[39]

While some Rabbis diminished the uniqueness of Ezekiel's merkabah vision by claiming that God had revealed Himself and His chariot to all Israel at certain times, other Rabbis denigrated Ezekiel's vision by connecting it with Israel's greatest sin, the forging of the golden calf. Several Tannaitic sources, seeking to defend Israel against the charge of idolatry, assert that the Israelites fashioned the golden calf after the image of the ox on God's chariot that they had seen at Mt. Sinai. This idea is presented in a Tannaitic comment on the use of the emphatic in the verse "I have surely seen the suffering of My people (Ex. 3:7)":

> And so when Israel was in Egypt, the Holy One, blessed be He, saw what they would do in the future, as it is written: 'And God said, I have surely seen'. It does not say, 'I have seen', but 'I have surely seen'. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Moses, you see one sight, but I see two sights. You see them coming to Sinai and accepting My Torah, and I see them accepting My Torah--this is the meaning of 'I have seen'. 'I have surely seen'--this is the sight of the golden calf, as it is said, 'I have seen this people (Ex. 32:9)'. When I come to Sinai to give them the Torah, I will descend in My chariot with four animals, and they will see Me and loosen one [of the animals] and provoke me thereby.[40]

Thus, while this statement preserves the honor of Israel, it criticizes, at least implicitly, Exekiel's merkabah vision. Although it is clear that the primary intent of this statement is to defend Israel, it seems equally clear that the scapegoat chosen to shoulder at least partial blame for the incident of the golden calf was selected with purpose and intent.

EZEKIEL'S *MERKABAH* VISION: LESSONS OF COMFORT FOR ISRAEL

Although Rabbinic sources manifest a strong tendency to denigrate Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision, and even to see in it a cause of Israel's sin, they also derive from it positive lessons of comfort. An ancient Tannaitic source, explaining the purpose of the *merkabah* vision, finds in it a message of hope for Israel:

> 'Son of man (Ezek. 2:1)'--to what may this be compared? To a human king whose wife and children rebelled against him. He arose and banished them from his house. Afterwards, he sent for and brought one son that was with her. He said to him: son, let me show you my court and my dwelling place that I have without your mother. Even though your mother remains outside, has my glory or my dwelling place been diminished? Thus did the vision appear to Ezekiel, the son of Buzi the priest as it is said: 'And it came to pass in the thirtieth year in the fourth month....(Ezek. 1:1-3)'. This is the first part of the vision.[41]

God called Ezekiel and showed him His heavenly abode so that the prophet could tell the people that their sin had not diminished God; it had only caused their own punishment. Rebellion against God was the folly of Israel. Repentance would assure their reconciliation with Him. In the meantime, God had not abandoned His people. He awaited their return. This source goes on to comment on the second part of Ezekiel's vision which begins with verse 4. Here the message of hope is even stronger, for God promises Israel's restoration even if the people do not repent:

> ...after He showed him the chariot, He said to him: son of man, is this the honor that you render to Me who has raised you above the nations of the world? Has my glory or My dwelling place been diminished because of you... Perhaps you will say there is no one to worship Me. I already have before Me four hundred and ninety-six thousand angels who stand and sanctify My great Name every day, from sunrise to sunset saying: 'holy, holy, holy', and from sunset to sunrise saying: 'Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place (Ezek. 3:12)'. Needless to mention the seventy tongues [of the nations praising Me] on earth. Why do you do ugly and unworthy things? Why do you make light of the chastisements that come upon you? However, what can I do? I will do it [spare you] for the sake of My great name by which you are called, as it is said: 'But I wrought for My name's sake, that I should not be profaned in the sight of the nations....(Ezek. 20:14)'.[42]

Here, God's exasperation and mercy are Israel's salvation. The people do not take their punishment seriously. Despite the people's rejection, God remains the same, and His merciful attitude towards Israel is undiminished. They will be restored, as it were, despite themselves.

Specific details of the vision also imparted lessons of comfort and hope for Israel. The third century Palestinian Amora, Resh Lakish, interpreted symbolically the four creatures in Ezekiel's vision:

> Resh Lakish said: What is the meaning of the verse: "I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted (Ex. 15:1)". [It means] a song to Him who is exalted over the exalted ones. For the master said: The king of the wild animals is the lion; the king of the cattle is

> the ox; the king of the birds is the eagle; and man is exalted over them; and the Holy One, blessed be He, is exalted over all of them and over the whole world.[43]

These four masterful creatures symbolize God's rule over all living things. The same tradition is also cited by Palestinian authorities of the next generation.[44] R. Abbahu, one of the leaders of Palestinian Jewry of the late third and early fourth centuries and an intimate of the Roman administrators resident in Cesarea, mentioned this interpretation in one of his sermons. By doing so, he was informing his people that although they were living under the heel of a foreign power, God still ruled over all and that the hand of His Providence should be seen in everything. Ezekiel received this message against despair during a previous age in the history of the people of Israel, a time when they were sunk in defeat and had lost their homeland and Temple to the invading Babylonians. The message was still appropriate for the generation of R. Abbahu.[45]

The second century Tanna R. Simeon bar Yohai saw in Ezekiel's vision the lesson of peaceful co-existence among opposing forces of nature. Citing Ezekiel 1:22, where the firmament is likened to ice, and 1:13 which describes the appearance of the _hayyoth_ as "coals of fire", R. Simeon noted that neither consumed nor quenched the other. The implication that there is a lesson applicable to the conduct of human affairs is clear.[46]

Several Rabbinic sources interpreted Ezekiel's description of the _hayyoth_ as symbolic of God's love for Israel and His readiness to accept the people's repentence for sins committed. Basing his interpretation on the _kethib_, "and his hand" in verse 8, Resh Lakish explained that God's hand, appearing as a human hand, extended forth beneath the wings of the _hayyoth_ in order to receive penitents.[47]

The Rabbis also used the number and location of the _hayyoth's_ wings to derive a lesson of consolation and hope. The fourth century Palestinian teacher, R. Jacob bar Zabdi, citing his teacher, R. Abbahu, taught that the heavenly chariot contained nothing that could remind God of Israel's sin:

> R. Jacob bar Zabdi citing R. Abbahu began his discourse with the verse, "Bringing the iniquity [the making of the golden calf] to remembrance against the House of Israel will not continue to be a source of reassurance [for heathen nations] (Ezek. 29:16)". He went on to quote the following: "Above Him stood the seraphim; each one had six wings" (Isa. 6:2)"...."With two he did fly (ibid.)", singing out God's praise as he flew; "with two he covered his face (ibid.)", so as not to gaze upon the Presence; "and with two he covered his feet" (ibid), that his feet should not be exposed to the Presence.

Rabbi Jacob's comment concludes by giving the reason for covering the seraphim's feet. Since the sole of the seraphim's feet was "like the sole of a calf's foot" (Ezek. 1:7), the seraphim covered their feet so that God should not be reminded of the sin of the golden calf.[48]

The same idea is also found in the Amoraic explanation of the Tannaitic prohibition against using a cow's horn for a shofar.[49] Both the Babylonian Talmud and the Palestinian Talmud state that a cow's horn may not be used because "the prosecuting attorney cannot become the defense attorney". The meaning is that since the shofar is an instrument used in a ritual whose purpose is to arouse God's mercy towards Israel, it would be inappropriate to fashion that instrument from an animal that would only serve to remind God of Israel's sin.[50]

Resh Lakish in yet another comment on the meaning of the heavenly creatures in Ezekiel's vision, employed this principle to resolve a contradiction between Ezekiel, 1:10 and Ezekiel, 10:14. The latter verse does not mention the ox as one of the four faces. It introduces in its place the face of a cherub. Resh Lakish offered the following explanation:

> Ezekiel entreated concerning it and changed it into a cherub. He said before Him: Lord of the universe, shall a prosecuting attorney become a defense attorney?[51]

EZEKIEL: DEFENDER AND CONSOLER

Midrashic literature describes Ezekiel's generation as very sinful. This generation, more than any other since the time of the Exodus, aroused God's anger.[52] When the people came to argue with him about his prophecies of destruction, Ezekiel outlined a whole catalogue of sins that they had been committing.[53] Nevertheless, the Rabbinic sources emphasize Ezekiel's attempts to console Israel rather than his chastising words.

Dwelling amongst his fellow countrymen in Babylonian exile, Ezekiel sought to assure them that God had not forsaken them. The Rabbis likened Ezekiel to a priest who administers the "waters of bitterness" to the wife suspected of infidelity (Num. 5:29ff). However, although Israel is guilty, she will not die, but will be reconciled with her God who will grant pardon and cleanse her from all her iniquity. Ezekiel's message to the exiles was one of reassurance of God's continued love and their eventual restoration to divine favor.[54]

Ezekiel went even further and told the exiles that God would not break His covenant with Israel even if they no longer wished to be a partner to that covenant. A Midrash, based on Ezekiel 20:32-34, tells of the exiles coming to Ezekiel and arguing that God no longer had a claim to their loyalty since He had exiled them, and was, therefore, like a master who had sold his slave and had lost thereby any rights to that slave. Ezekiel answered that the sale was a conditional one, limited to a specific time period, and with the lapse of that period the slave must return to his original master. Israel might violate the covenant and receive punishment for this, but God would never revoke His covenant.[55]

Not the least significant aspect of Ezekiel's consolatory message was his blueprint of the restored Temple. While his prayer to God not to destroy the Temple had been ignored,[56] Ezekiel was shown a picture of the Temple as it would exist in the future restoration (chs. 43ff). The early fourth century Palestinian Amora, R. Samuel bar Abba, taught that the study of the sacrificial laws during the time when the Temple was destroyed was equivalent to offering sacrifices on the altar. He adduced proof for this from Ezekiel:

> Come and see; when the Holy One, blessed be He, shows to Ezekiel the plan of the Temple, what does He say? "You, son of man, show the house to the house of Israel that they may be ashamed of their iniquities; and let them measure accurately (Ezek. 43:10)". Ezekiel said before the Holy One, blessed be He: 'Lord of the world, now when we are in exile in the land of our enemies, you tell me to go and show Israel the plan of the Temple and to write it down for them to see and for them to observe all of its forms and laws--are they able to do this? Let it go until they return from exile, and then I will go and tell them'. The Holy One, blessed be He, answered Ezekiel: 'And should the rebuilding of my Temple be put off because My children are in exile?' The Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'studying it [the Temple laws] in the Torah is as great as building it. Go tell them that they should study the plan of the Temple in the Torah, and as the reward for studying it, I attribute it to them as if they are building it'.[57]

This view mitigated the destruction of the Temple and the loss of Jerusalem by providing at least a symbolic method for the continued worship of God by means of the

Temple cult while, at the same time, keeping alive the hope of an ultimate restoration of the Temple. In R. Samuel bar Abba's time, it may have well served as an answer to those who claimed that the destruction of the Temple was proof of God's rejection of Israel, for it was God Himself who assured Ezekiel that study of the sacrificial laws was equivalent to offering sacrifices.

In addition to emphasizing the consolatory nature of Ezekiel's prophecies to the exiles, the Rabbis also stressed his role as defender of Israel. The _Talmud_ relates that R. Abbahu was confronted once by a heretic who claimed that God made His prophets look ridiculous. The proof was in Ezekiel 4:4,6 where God commanded Ezekiel to lie down first on his right side and then on his left side. R. Abbahu answered that God inflicted discomfort and suffering on Ezekiel because through his suffering, Israel would be spared God's wrath:

> a king of flesh and blood against whom his subjects have rebelled, if he be cruel, kills them all; if merciful, he slays half of them; but if he is exceptionally merciful, he only chastises the great ones. So also, the Holy One, blessed be He, afflicted Ezekiel in order to cleanse Israel from their iniquities.[58]

W. Braude and I. Kapstein see the same lesson taught in another tradition. Several sources contain a Rabbinic discussion on the nature of the bread that God commanded Ezekiel to make in order to sustain himself during his symbolic enactment of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem (Ezek. 4:19). It was a bread made mostly of barley and it caused physical discomfort to Ezekiel. A Babylonian tradition is quoted that a similar barley bread was once offered to a dog who refused to eat it. The text continues:

> A Roman lady, in speaking to R. Jose ben Halafta, exclaimed: What pain that righteous Ezekiel must have endured. And to think that every one of the great number of manservants and maidservants he had, looked down upon him because of the food and drink he chose to live on! R. Jose ben Halafta replied: Ezekiel's pain was meant to make you understand that whenever Israel is in pain, the righteous are in pain with them.[59]

Braude and Kapstein explain the barley bread as "a symbol of the suffering and self-denial which a great man willingly took upon himself, thereby to divert God's wrath from Israel; otherwise His wrath might have consumed Israel altogether."[60]

EZEKIEL'S GENEALOGY

According to the Rabbis, Ezekiel's sufferings on behalf of Israel earned him a special measure of affection from God. In Ezekiel 1:2, God calls the prophet ben adam ("man") which the Rabbis interpret as a term denoting love and affection. In referring to Ezekiel as ben adam, God was saying: "son of worthy forebears, son of righteous forebears, son of those who practice lovingkindness, son of forebears who throughout their lives abased themselves

UMI

for the glory of God and for the glory of Israel".[61] This comment may be a reaction to the Midrash that traces Ezekiel's ancestry to Rahab.[62] Indeed, according to one source, Israel mocked Ezekiel because of his ancestry by asking: "Is he not of the descendants of Rahab the harlot?" In order to defend the honor of Ezekiel, Scripture specified his lofty pedigree: "the word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi".[63]

EZEKIEL AND THE RESURRECTION

Certainly the most pronounced element of consolation in Ezekiel's prophecies to Israel was his revival of the dry bones, symbolizing the resurrection and restoration of the people of Israel. However, it is striking that Rabbinic treatment of this vision played down both the vision itself and Ezekiel's role in it.

Although Ezekiel's vision was a clear demonstration of the resurrection of the dead, the Rabbis did not use it as the sole proof for this belief. In the discussions of the Biblical proof for the resurrection, the Rabbis cite a variety of verses from the Bible, mostly from the Pentateuch. Of the books of the prophets, only verses from Isaiah are used.[64] Furthermore, the Rabbis disagreed over whether the story of the resurrection of the dry bones was real or only a parable. R. Judah declared it to be a parable. On the other hand, R. Eliezer, the son of R. Jose the Galilean, stated that: "The dead whom Ezekiel revived went up to Palestine, married wives and begat sons and daughters", and R. Judah ben Bathyra, claiming to be one of their descendants, produced phylacteries which his grandfather, one of those resurrected, had left as an heirloom.[65]

Another way in which the Rabbis downgraded Ezekiel's vision was by stressing the differences between the resurrection in the valley of dry bones and the resurrection that God would bring about. A Talmudic tradition asserts that "the dead whom Ezekiel resurrected stood up, uttered song and died" whereas the resurrection that God would bring at the final time of redemption would be everlasting.[66] A later Midrash embellishes this theme and portrays the resurrected ones complaining bitterly over their fate:

> In that hour the Israelites were weeping and saying: We hoped to stand up with all Israel at the resurrection of the dead, and now "our hope is lost (Ezek. 37:11)".[67]

God, however, assured them that they, too, would be resurrected again at the end of days.

We can see a further distinction between the two resurrections in the dispute between the Shammaites and the Hillelites over whether the bodily resurrection would follow the same procedure as had occurred at Creation. When God created man, He began with the skin and flesh and ended with sinews and bones. Ezekiel, 37:8 speaks of the resurrection beginning with sinews and bones. The

Shammaites concluded from this that the resurrection would not follow the same procedure as had occurred at Creation. The Hillelites, however, disagreed and drew no conclusions from Ezekiel, apparently agreeing with R. Jonathan's view that those resurrected by Ezekiel were like one who went to a bath house--that piece of clothing that he took off first, he put on last.[68] R. Jonathan gave a natural explanation for the procedure that had taken place in the valley of the dry bones and detached from it any implications to be drawn concerning the final resurrection.

RESURRECTION--MESSAGE OF HOPE

Despite their tendency to downgrade Ezekiel's resurrection of the dead, the Rabbis derived an important consolatory message from this episode in their discussion of the persons whom God resurrected. A number of Rabbis indicated that those resurrected by Ezekiel had committed one kind of sin or another. The third century Amora, Rab, identified them with the Ephraimites who had left Egypt thirty years prematurely, and who had been slaughtered by the Philistines in the desert. Their sin was that they had followed a false leader who promised redemption rather than waiting patiently for the true redeemer to appear.[69] Those who had fallen prey to a movement of false redemption would now be used by God in a demonstration of the real redemption. Rab's contemporary, Samuel, declared that

UMI

Ezekiel had resurrected those who denied the possibility of resurrection.[70] Although these were unworthy of resurrection because they had denied its possibility, they would be the very ones through whom God would work His miracle. Rab's student, R. Jeremiah bar Abba, said that Ezekiel had revived those who were lacking in good deeds.[71] Even the wicked, according to R. Jeremiah, would participate in the redemption. R. Isaac Nappaha went further and proclaimed that those revived were people who had desecrated the Temple with idolatrous practices.[72] From these Amoraic comments there emerges the comforting thought that even the sinners of Israel will participate in the redemption.[73]

EZEKIEL AND HANANIAH, MISHAEL AND AZARIAH

While the opinions mentioned above identify the dead whom Ezekiel resurrected in the valley of Dura as wicked, a number of Rabbinic sources disagree. A statement in Ecclesiastes Rabba states explicitly that they were righteous.[74] That same source also contains the opinion of R. Judah bar Simon praising the dead for their obedience to God's command to arise and contrasting this obedience with the living who do not hearken to God's word.[75] In a Talmudic discussion, the Amora, R. Johanan explained that the bones belonged to the handsome young Israelites exiled by Nebuchadnezzar. These attractive young men inflamed the passions of the Babylonian women. Their jealous husbands instigated the king to kill them. When even this did not calm the passions of the women, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the Israelite bodies to be trampled beyond recognition on the plain of Dura.[76] Following R. Johanan's statement, the Talmud provides a description of the circumstances in which the resurrection occurred. God commanded Ezekiel to resurrect the dead in the plain of Dura at the very time when Nebuchadnezzar was offering Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah to the flames of the furnace (Daniel, 3).[77]

Midrashic sources elaborate on the connection between Ezekiel's resurrection of the dead and the trial of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Midrash Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer maintains that when Nebuchadnezzar erected an idol in the plain of Dura (Daniel 3:1ff), and ordered all to worship it, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah refused and were cast into the furnace. God saved the young men from the flames, and the king, witnessing God's power, reprimanded the Israelites who had paid homage to the idol:

> You knew that you had a God who saves and delivers; why have you forsaken your God and worshipped idols which have no power to deliver? But just as you did in your own land and destroyed it, so do you attempt to do in this land, [namely] to destroy it.[78]

Nebuchadnezzar then gave the command to slay the Israelites. Twenty years later God brought Ezekiel to the plain of Dura and ordered him to revive the dead.

Three other Midrashim--Tanhuma, Seder Eliahu Rabba, and Canticles Rabba--connect Ezekiel's resurrection of the dead with the trial of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. These accounts, as well as that in Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer, either present Ezekiel in an unfavorable light or view the miracle of the resurrection of the dry bones as secondary to the rescue of the three young men.[79]

Canticles Rabba contains a tradition in the name of R. Simeon bar Yohai that Nebuchadnezzar compelled only representatives of the various peoples to worship his idol. The Israelite representatives were Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. Upon receiving the king's order, the three young men sought the advice of Daniel, and he referred them to Ezekiel. The prophet, basing himself on Isaiah, 26:20, "hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be past", advised them to flee and hide. The young men refused on the grounds that their absence might not be noticed, and everyone would assume that all peoples bowed to the idol. They wanted to defy the king and not worship the idol so that the people could see that "all nations bow down to this image, except Israel". Ezekiel thereupon cautioned against haste and told the young men that he would consult God about their fate. Despite Ezekiel's pleading, God said that He would not stand by the young men. However, even the knowledge that God would not protect them did not deter Hananiah, Mishael

UMI

and Azariah, and they informed Ezekiel that "whether He stands by us or does not stand by us, we will sacrifice our lives for the sanctification of God's name".[80] The account concludes with God's assurance to Ezekiel that He would not abandon the three would-be-martyrs.[81]

In this story, Ezekiel clearly pales in contrast to the three young men. Their faith is strong and resolute. They will not forsake God even if He abandons them. The prophet, on the other hand, vacillates and advises a very prudent course of action in the face of forced idolatry.[82]

More derogatory to Ezekiel is the account of the fourth century Palestinian Amora, R. Phinehas, cited in Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer. R. Phinehas portrays the prophet as lacking faith in God:

> the Holy Spirit rested upon Ezekiel, and brought him forth into the plain of Dura, and called unto him very dry bones, and said to him: Son of Man! What do you see? He answered: I see here dry bones. [The Spirit] said to him: Have I power to revive them? The prophet did not say: Sovereign of all the worlds! You have power to do even more than [this] here; but he said: 'O Lord God, You know (Ezek. 37:3)', as though he did not believe.[83]

As punishment for this disbelief, Ezekiel's bones were not buried in the land of Israel. Ezekiel's skepticism continued even when God commanded him to prophesy to the bones:

> He said before Him: Sovereign of all the worlds! What! will the prophecy bring upon them flesh and sinews and bones? Or will the prophecy bring upon them all their flesh and bones which cattle, beast, and bird have eaten, and they [also] have died in the land?[84]

R. Phinehas' negative interpretation of Ezekiel's answer to God's question is not the only way the Rabbis found of explaining Ezekiel's puzzling words. The Palestinian Amora, R. Haninah bar Pappa, compared Ezekiel's answer to someone who met a hunter who held a captured bird in his hand. The man asked him whether the bird was dead or alive. The hunter responded: "If you want it to live it will live, and if you want it to die it will die".[85] According to R. Haninah, Ezekiel was not expressing doubt when he said, "You know, Lord". Ezekiel's answer was, in fact, an expression of faith in and acceptance of God's will. The fate of the bones was in the hands of God. He could do with them as He chose.

There is one further Rabbinic tradition which, while not critical of Ezekiel, diminishes the significance of the miracle of the resurrection of the dry bones. Concerning the trial of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, the Talmud says:

> Our Rabbis taught: six miracles were wrought on that day, viz.: (1) the furnace floated upward; (2) its walls [partly] fell in; (3) its foundations crumbled [with the heat]; (4) the image was overthrown upon its face; (5) four royal suites [i.e. kings and their retinues] were burned; (6) Ezekiel resurrected the dead in the valley of Dura.[86]

This tradition makes it clear that the main occurrence on that day was not Ezekiel's resurrection of the dead. That was only one of the six miracles that accompanied the crucial event--the near martyrdom of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah and their miraculous rescue by God. The purpose of the miracles is to serve as a demonstration of God's vindication of the three young men. The first four miracles show the power of God and the worthlessness of the idol. The fifth indicates that idolators, certainly those who seek to impose their idolatry on Israel, will be punished. The last miracle points to a relationship between martyrology and redemption. It is this relationship that holds the key to understanding why the Rabbis tied the story of the three young men to that of Ezekiel's resurrection of the dead. The lesson seems to be that Israel's ultimate redemption (symbolized by Ezekiel's revival of the dry bones) is connected with, indeed, dependent on Israel's willingness to stand the ultimate test of loyalty to God--to die rather than betray Him. As a miracle in its own right, and as an indicator of the future redemption, Ezekiel's revival of the dead is of limited importance. However, tied to the path that Israel must travel to earn that redemption, it becomes a symbol of hope and comfort.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The portrayal of Nebuchadnezzar in the sources strengthens the connection between Ezekiel's resurrection of the dead and the martyr theme of the story of the three

UMI

young men. The Talmud relates that when Ezekiel revived the dead, one of the bones came and hit Nebuchadnezzar in his face. The surprised king asked what kind of bone this was. When his advisors informed him that it was one of the bones that Ezekiel had revived, Nebuchadnezzar broke forth into song praising God. According to R. Isaac, had not an angel struck him upon the mouth, the king's songs and praises would have eclipsed those of David.[87] The point of this tale is that the resurrection, the symbol of God's redemption of Israel, is accomplished so that all can see it, even the enemies of Israel. It is a public act in which God vindicates Israel before the nations of the earth. Seeing this, the nations will admit their errors and acknowledge God.

The effect of Jewish martyrdom on Israel's Gentile foes is a common theme in Jewish martyrological literature. Jacob Katz has noted that "...it may be asserted that the religious attitude of the adversary is not outside the concern of the martyr".[88] While Katz brings proof of this from the medieval Jewish crusade chronicles, examples from other eras are also available. The Talmud noted the effect of R. Hananiah b. Teradion's act of martyrdom on his Roman executioner.[89] Even earlier, Josephus wrote of the profound effect made on the Romans by the mass suicide at Masada.[90] These examples are concerned with the effect of the act of Jewish martyrdom

UMI

on the Gentile persecutors. In our case, Nebuchadnezzar is not impressed by the willingness of the Jews to undergo martyrdom. Rather, it is God's vindication of the would-be martyrs[91] that the enemies of Israel behold in wondermont. Just as the act of martyrdom is performed publicly, so, too, will God's vindication of Israel be public. The resurrection of Israel will be an act that will affect not only Israel, but the entire world as well.[92] All will witness Israel's redemption and will praise her God.

NOTES TO CHAPTER IV

1. TB Shabbat, 13b.

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב ברם זכור אותו האיש לטוב וחנניה
בן חזקיה שמו שאלמלא הוא נגנז ספר יחזקאל שהיו דבריו
סותרין דברי תורה מה עשה העלו לו ג׳ מאות גרבי שמן וישב
בעלייה ודרשן.

Cf. also TB Menahot, 45a and TB Hagigah, 13a. For a discussion of the discrepancies between Ezekiel and the Torah, see Yehezkel Kaufmann, The Religion of Israel (Chicago: 1960), pp. 210-211, 307, 429, 434-435, 439, 444-445.

2. "Ezekiel", Encyclopedia Judaica, VI, p. 1094.

3. Marcus Jastrow, Dictionary of Talmud Babli, Yerushalmi, Midrashic Literature and Targumim (New York: 1950), I, p. 258.

4. George F. Moore, Judaism (Cambridge: 1927), I, p. 247. Cf. also Herbert E. Ryle, The Canon of the Old Testament (New York: 1892), pp. 186-202. Ryle defines ganuz as the term used to denote "disputed books which it was not advisable to read publicly as Canonical Scripture (p. 187)". Books rejected outright were called hizonim, "extraneous" or "outside". These are the books of the Apocrypha. All books accepted into the Canon were referred to as books that "defiled the hands", cf. below, footnote 6. In a recent study, S. Leiman has catalogued the

UMI

Talmudic and Midrashic use of the term *ganuz*, and has concluded that it means to withdraw from public usage. Sid Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden: 1976), pp. 72-86. For a summary of other proposed interpretations of *ganuz*, cf. *ibid.*, p. 173, n. 318.

5. "Ezekiel", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, VI, p. 1094 and "Bible: The Canon, Text and Editions", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, IV, p. 824.

6. *Mishnah Yadaim*, 3:5.

כל כתבי הקדש מטמאין את הידים שיר השירים וקהלת מטמאות
את הידים רבי יהודה אומר שיר השירים מטמא את הידים
וקהלת מחלקת רבי יוסי אומר קהלת אינה מטמא את הידים
ושיר השירים מחלקת.

"All the Holy Scriptures render the hands unclean. Canticles and Ecclesistes render the hands unclean. R. Judah says: Canticles renders the hands unclean, but there is dissension about Ecclesistes. R. Jose says: Ecclesiastes does not render the hands unclean, and there is dissension about Canticles...". Cf. also *Tosephta Yadaim*, 2:14.

"Render the hands unclean" is the Rabbinic term used to denote the canonical status of a book. The term was used to prevent the mishandling of sacred books. For another view however, see S. Leiman, *Canonization*, pp. 102-120.

7. *TB Megillah*, 7a and *TB Shabbat*, 30b.

8. *TB Baba Bathra*, 15a.

חזקיה וסיעתו כתבו ישעיה משלי שיר השירים וקהלת אנשי
כנסת הגדולה כתבו יחזקאל ושנים עשר דניאל ומגלת אסתר.

9. Louis Ginzberg, *Legends*, VI, p. 368, n. 89. Ginzberg's suggestion is based on *ARN(A)*, 1, pp. 2-3 which contains two interpretations of the teaching given in the name of the Great Assembly, "Be deliberate in judgment". The first states that being "deliberate" refers to Hezekiah and his associates who edited the Book of Proverbs very deliberately and over a long period of time. This interpretation is based on Prov. 25:1, "These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out". The second explanation is that of Abba Saul who said that the phrase "deliberate in judgment" means that the Great Assembly interpreted the books of Proverbs, Canticles, and Ecclesistes in such a way as to make them acceptable.

10. Ginzberg translates *katav* as "edit". All of these books posed difficulties. It was believed that the prophets wrote down their words before their death. Isaiah, however, was killed and, therefore, had no opportunity to do this. Therefore, Hezekiah and his associates compiled the book of Isaiah. Cf. Rashi to

TB Baba Bathra, 15a ad. loc. Some medieval authorities noted the chronological impossibility in having Hezekiah and his associates compile the book of Isaiah since the prophet lived longer than the king. Cf. Tosafot ad. loc.

More serious were the problems of content posed by Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, and Esther. See above, n. 6 and 7. The Twelve were too small to be written individually and were compiled together by the Great Assembly so they would not be lost. The problem with Daniel was that his prophecies were delivered outside of the Land of Israel. Cf. Rashi, TB Baba Bathra, 15a ad. loc. Rashi gives the same explanation for the difficulty with Ezekiel.

11. TB Menahoth, 45a.

> ...ומנין שאם לא מצא שנים מביא אחד ת"ל פר ששה כבשים
> מה ת"ל לפי שכתב בתורה שבעה ומנין שאם לא מצא שבעה
> יביא ששה ת"ל ששה...

The contradictory verses are Ezek. 46:6 and Num. 28:11.

12. Ibid.

> כה אמר ה' אלהים בראשון באחד לחודש תקח פר בן בקר תמים
> וחטאת את המקדש חטאת עולה היא א"ר יוחנן פרשה זו אליהו
> עתיד לדורשה...וכל נבלה וטרפה מן העוף ומן הבהמה לא
> יאכלו הכהנים כהנים הוא דלא יאכלו הא ישראל אכלי א"ר
> יוחנן פרשה זו אליהו עתיד לדורשה.

The contradictory verses are Ezek. 45:18 and Num. 28:11

and Ezek. 44:31 and Deut. 14:21.

13. TB Zebahim, 22b.

אמר רב חסדא דבר זה מתורת משה רבינו לא למדנו מדברי
יחזקאל בן בוזי למדנו כל בן נכר ערל לב וערל בשר לא
יבא אל מקדשי ומנלן דמחלי עבודה דכתיב בהביאכם בני
נכר ערלי לב וערלי בשר להיות במקדשי לחלל את ביתי.

The verse in Ezek. 44:9 reads, "...no alien uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh shall enter into My sanctuary, even any alien that is among the children of Israel". Ezek. 44:7 reads, "In that you have brought in aliens, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary, to profane it...when you offer My bread...they have broken My covenant...".

14. Ibid., 18b.

רבינא אמר מהכא פארי פשתים יהיו על ראשם.

15. TB Moed Katan, 5a.

אמר ר"ש בן פזי רמז לציון קברות מן התורה מנלן תלמוד
לומר וראה עצם אדם ובנה אצלו ציון.

16. TB Zebahim, 18b.

א"ל רב אשי לרבינא והא עד דאתא יחזקאל מנלן...אלא גמרא
גמירי לה ואתא יחזקאל ואסמכיה אקרא...

Cf. also TB Sanhedrin, 22b and TB Yoma, 71b.

17. TB Makkot, 24a.

משה אמר פוקד עון אבות על בנים בא יחזקאל וביטלה הנפש
החוטאת היא תמות.

UMI

18. Mishnah Megillah, 4:10.

אין מפטירין במרכבה ורבי יהודה מתיר.

"They may not use the merkabah as a reading from the prophets; but R. Judah permits it".

19. Tosephta Megillah, 4:34.

והמרכבה קורין אותה לרבים.

This baraita contains an additional dispute over another section of Ezekiel. R. Eliezer prohibited the reading of Ezekiel's denunciation of Jerusalem (ch. 16). The Rabbis, however, disagreed. Cf. also Mishnah Megillah, 4:10.

20. Mishnah Hagigah, 2:1.

אין דורשין בעריות בשלשה ולא במעשה בראשית בשנים ולא
במרכבה ביחיד אלא אם כן היה חכם ומבין מדעתו.

21. Tosephta Hagigah, 2:1,2.

מעשה בר׳ אלעזר בן ערך שהיה מחמר אחר ר׳ יוחנן בן זכאי
אמר לו ר׳ דרוש לי פרק אחד במעשה מרכבה אמר לו...אין
דורשין במרכבה ליחיד אלא אם כן היה חכם ומבין מדעתו
אמר לו תן לי רשות וארצה לפניך מיד ירד רבן יוחנן בן
זכאי מן החמור ונתעטף וישבו שניהם על גבי אבן תחת הזית
והירצה לפניו ועמד ונשקו על ראשו...ר׳ יוסי בר׳ יהודה
אומר ר׳ יהושע הירצה לפני רבן יוחנן בן זכאי ר׳ עקיבא
הירצה לפני ר׳ יהושע חנניא בן חכינאי הירצה לפני
ר׳ עקיבא.

"...it happened once that R. Eleazar ben Arakh was riding on his donkey after R. Johanan ben Zakkai. He

[R. Eleazar] said to him: Master, expound one section of the merkabah for me. He replied: Have I not taught you that it is forbidden to expound the merkabah to one person unless he were wise and discerning. R. Eleazar said: Permit me to expound it for you. Immediately, R. Johanan ben Zakkai descended from his donkey and they both wrapped themselves in their fringed garments and sat on a rock under an olive tree, and R. Eleazar expounded before him. R. Johanan arose and kissed him on his head...R. Jose the son of R. Judah said: R. Joshua expounded [the merkabah] before R. Johanan ben Zakkai; R. Akiba expounded before R. Joshua; Hananiah ben Hakhinai expounded before R. Akiba".

Cf. TB Hagigah, 14b for a slightly different version of the incident with R. Eleazar ben Arakh.

22. TB Hagigah, 13a.

א"ל רבי יוחנן לרבי אלעזר תא אגמרך במעשה המרכבה א"ל לא קשאי.

"R. Johanan said to R. Eleazar: Come, I will teach you the merkabah. He replied: I am not old enough".

23. Ibid., 13a.

אמר רבי זירא אין מוסרין ראשי פרקים אלא לאב בית דין ולכל מי שלבו דואג בקרבו איכא דאמרי והוא שלבו דואג בקרבו.

24. Ibid.

רב יוסף הוה גמיר מעשה המרכבה סבי דפומבדיתא הוו תנו

במעשה בראשית אמרו ליה ליגמיר לן מר מעשה מרכבה אמר להו
אגמרון לי מעשה בראשית בתר דאגמרון אמרו ליה ליגמרן
מר במעשה מרכבה אמר להו תנינא בהו דבש וחלב תחת לשונך
דברים המתוקין מדבש וחלב יהו תחת לשונך.

"R. Joseph was studying the merkabah. The elders of Pumbeditha were studying the first chapter of Genesis (i.e. its mystical interpretation). They said to him: Will the master teach us merkabah. He replied: Teach me the first chapter of Genesis. After they had taught him, they said to him: Let the master teach us merkabah. He replied: It is taught, "Honey and milk are under your tongue (Cant. 4:11)"--things which are sweeter than honey and milk [i.e. merkabah] should be under your tongue [i.e. kept secret]".

25. Ibid.

אמר רבי אמי אין מוסרין סתרי תורה אלא למי שיש בו
חמשה דברים שר חמשים ונשוא פנים ויועץ וחכם חרשים
ונבון לחש (Isa. 3:3).

26. TB Hagigah, 14b.

ת"ר ארבעה נכנסו לפרדס ואלו הן בן עזאי ובן זומא אחר
ור' עקיבא אמר להם ר"ע כשאתם מגיעין אצל אבני שיש טהור
אל תאמרו מים מים משום שנאמר דובר שקרים לא יכון לנגד
עיני בן עזאי הציץ ומת עליו הכתוב אומר יקר בעיני ה'
המותה לחסידיו בן זומא הציץ ונפגע ועליו הכתוב אומר
דבש מצאת אכול דייך פן תשבענו והקאתו אחר קיצץ בנטיעות
רבי עקיבא יצא בשלום.

Tosephta Hagigah, 2:3,4 contains a shortened version of the incident. According to G. Scholem, this passage describes "the dangers confronting the mystic in his ascent through the seven palaces of the seventh heaven...". Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: 1965), p. 14. The symbolism of the water and the marble are attested to in later Jewish mystical literature. Scholem cites the following from a later source: "At the gate of the sixth palace it seemed as though hundreds of thousands of waves of water were storming against him, and yet there was not a drop of water, only the ethereal glitter of the marble plates with which the palace was tessellated". *Ibid*. To "mutilate the shoots" probably means to become a dualistic Gnostic. "Kabbalah", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, X, p. 499. For the translation of *pardes* as paradise, cf. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: 1961), pp. 52-53 and G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 14ff. In both of these works, but especially the later, Scholem has demonstrated that the Tannaitic age was a time of considerable esoteric speculation and writing based on the *merkabah* vision.

27. *TB Hagigah*, 13a.

ת"ר מעשה בתינוק אחד שהיה קורא בבית רבו בספר יחזקאל

והיה מבין בחשמל ויצא אש מחשמל ושרפתו.

Hashmal, mentioned in verse 27, is rendered in the Jewish Publication Society translation as "the colour of electrum". It is part of the description of God's appearance.

28. Ibid., 14b.

מיד פתח רבי אלעזר בן ערך במעשה המרכבה ודרש וירדה אש
מן השמים וסיבבה כל האילנות שבשדה פתחו כולן ואמר שירה
...נענה מלאך מן האש ואמר הן הן מעשה המרכבה.

Cf. also G. Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 51-52.

29. Genesis R., 5:5.

אמר ר׳ ירמיה בן אלעזר לא על הים בלבד התנה הקדוש ברוך
הוא אלא אם כל מה שנברא בששת ימי בראשית...צויתי את
השמים שיפתחו לקול יחזקאל שנאמר נפתחו השמים ואראה
מראות אלהים.

"R. Jeremiah ben Eleazar said: Not only with the sea did God make a stipulation [at the time of creation God stipulated with the sea that it divide before Israel], but with everything that was created during the six days of creation...I commanded the heavens to open before Ezekiel as it is written, 'The heavens opened and I saw visions of God (Ezekiel 1:1)'".
Cf. also Exodus R., 21:6.

30. TB Hagigah, 13b.

אמר רבא כל שראה יחזקאל ראה ישעיה.

Cf. above, p. 147, n. 7.

31. Ibid.

כתוב אחד אומר שש כנפים לאחד וכתוב אחד אומר וארבעה פנים לאחת וארבע כנפים לאחת להם לא קשיא כאן בזמן שבית המקדש קיים כאן בזמן שאין בית המקדש קיים כביכול שנתמעטו כנפי החיות.

32. Mekilta Shira to Ex. 15:2, pp. 126-127.

זה אלי ר׳ אליעזר אומר מנין אתה אומר שראתה שפחה על הים מה שלא ראו ישעיה ויחזקאל שנ׳ וביד הנביאים אדמה וכתיב נפתחו השמים ואראה מראות אלהים משל למלך בשר ודם שנכנס למדינה ועליו צפירה מקיפתו וגבורים מימינו ומשמאלו וחיילות מלפניו ומלאחריו והיו הכל שואלין אי זהו המלך מפני שהוא בשר ודם כמותם אבל כשנגלה הקב"ה על הים לא הוצרך אחד מהם לשאול אי זהו המלך אלא כיון שראוהו הכירוהו פתחו כולן פיהן ואמרו זה אלי ואנוהו וגו׳.

See also Deuteronomy R., 7:9.

א"ר הושעיא ראה הפחות בימי משה מה שלא ראה יחזקאל גדול בנביאים בני אדם שדברה עמהם שכינה פנים בפנים שנא׳ פנים בפנים דבר ה׳ עמכם.

"R. Hoshaya said: The lowliest man in the days of Moses saw what was not vouchsafed to Ezekiel, the greatest of the prophets; [those in the days of Moses] were men with whom the Divine Presence spoke face to face, as it is said, 'The Lord spoke with you face to face (Deut. 5:4)'".

33. Siphre to Deut. 33:2, p. 398.

ואתא מרבבות קודש אות הוא בתוך רבבות קודש וכשנגלה על

הים מיד הכירוהו שנ׳ זה אלי ואנוהו.

Cf. also PK, 12:22. Exodus R., 23:8 contains a legend stating that the Israelite babies whom Pharaoh sought to kill were nurtured and raised by God who assumed the appearance of a young man when he came to their aid. At the Red Sea, these children recognized God and said to their parents: "This is my God and I will glorify Him (Ex. 15:2)".

34. Mekilta Shira to Ex. 15:3, p. 129.

...לפי שנגלה על הים כגבור עושה מלחמה שנאמר ה׳ איש מלחמה נגלה בסיני כזקן מלא רחמים שנ׳ ויראו את אלהי ישראל.

35. Tanhuma (Buber) Jethro, 16, p. 79.

ר"א לפי שנראה להם הקב"ה כים כגבור עושה מלחמה ונראה להם בסיני כסופר מלמד תורה נראה להם בימי שלמה כבחור ונראה להם בימי דניאל כזקן אמר להם הקב"ה לא בשביל שהם רואים אותו דמויות הרבה אני הוא שבים אני הוא שבסיני אנכי ה׳ אלהיך אמר ר׳ חייא בר אבא לפי כל עסק ועסק וכן כל דבר ודבר נראה להם בים כגבור עושה מלחמותיהם של ישראל בסיני היה מלמד תורה לישראל ועומד כסופר בימי דניאל כזקן מלמד תורה שכן נאה להיות תורה יוצאת מפי הזקנים נראה להם בימי שלמה כבחור לפי מעשיהם שנאמר מראהו כלבנון בחור כארזים.

36. The connection of God's revelations with significant events in Israel's history is also made in Siphre to Deut. 33:2, p. 398.

ארבע הופעות הם ראשונה במצרים שנ׳ רועה ישראל האזינה

נוהג כצאן יוסף...שנייה כשעת מתן תורה שנ׳ הופיע מהר פארן
שלישית לימות גוג ומגוג שנ׳ אל נקמות ה׳ אל נקמות הופיע
רביעית לימות המשיח שנ׳ מציון מכלל יופי אלהים הופיע.

"There are four appearances [of God]. The first was in Egypt, as it says, 'Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, You who led Israel like a flock (Ps. 80:2)'; the second was at the time of the giving of the Torah, as it says, 'He appeared from Mt. Paran...at His right hand was a fiery law for them (Deut. 33:2)'; the third in the days of Gog and Magog, as it says, 'O Lord, God of vengeance, God of vengeance, appear (Ps. 94:1)'; the fourth in the messianic future, as it says, 'Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has appeared (Ps. 50:2)'".

Cf. also *Canticles* R., 3:9.

37. *Canticles R*., 1:9.

אמר ר׳ יודן מכין גלגלי המרכבה שמטן הקב"ה והטיסן על הים.

38. *Ibid*.

אמר ר׳ חנינא בר פפא בשר ודם שהוא רוכב על טוענו על דבר
שיש בו ממש אבל הקב"ה אינו כן טוען את רכובו ורוכב על
רבר שאין בו ממש שנ׳ וירכב על כרוב ויעוף וידא על כנפי
רוח.

39. *PK*, 12:2.

ר"א רכב אלהים ריבותים אלפי שנאן ירד עם הקב"ה עשרים
ושנים אלף מרכבות ועל כל מרכבה ומרכבה שראה יחזקאל.

Cf. also *PR*, 21, p. 102b.

UMI

40. Exodus R., 3:2.

וכן כשהיו ישראל במצרים ראה הקב"ה מה עתידין לעשות
הדא הוא דכתיב ויאמר ה' ראה ראיתי ראיתי לא נאמר אלא
ראה ראיתי אמר לו הקב"ה משה אתה רואה ראיה אחת ואני
רואה שתי ראיות אתה רואה אותן באין לסיני ומקבלין
תורתי ואני רואה אותן מקבלין תורתי זהו ראה ראיתי זו
ראית מעשה העגל שנ' ראיתי את העם הזה כשאבוא לסיני
לתן להם את התורה אני יורד בטטראמולי שלי שהן מתבוננים
בי ושומטים אחד מהן ומכעיסים אותי בו...

The play is on the doubling of the verb ראה ראיתי which the Midrash interprets as meaning that God saw two things. Cf. also Exodus R., 42:5; 43:8; and Tanhuma Ki Tisa, 21.

S. Lieberman cites sources that say that the Israelites carried an idol with them across the Red Sea. This idol was the calf which they had made in the image of the ox on God's chariot which had appeared to them at the Red Sea. Cf. S. Lieberman, "Mishnat Shir ha-Shirim" in G. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, p. 122, n. 24.

The view that Israel fashioned the golden calf after the image of the ox on the divine chariot was not unchallenged in Tannaitic circles. R. Akiba strongly objected to it. Cf. Mekilta Beshalach to Ex. 15:19, p. 112. Cf. also L. Ginzberg, Legends, VI, p. 52, n. 271.

41. *Leviticus R.*, 2:8.

דבר אחר בן אדם למה הדבר דומה למלך בשר ודם שמרדה
עליו אשתו ובניו עמד ודחפן מביתו והוציאן לחוץ לאחר
מכאן שלח והביא בן אחד מאצלה א"ל בן פלוני בא ואראך
ביתי ובית שכינתי שיש לי חוץ מאמך כלום פיחת בכודי
ושכינתי אע"פ שאמך עומדת מבחוץ לכך נדמה ליחזקאל בן
בוזי הכהן שנ' ויהי בשלשים שנה ברביעי בחמשה לחדש היה
דבר ה' זו שיטה ראשונה.

Cf. also *Seder Eliahu Rabba*, 6.

42. *Ibid*.

מאחר שהראהו כל המרכבה אמר לו בן אדם זהו כבודי שהגבהתי
אתכם למעלה מאומות העולם כלום פיחת כבודי ובית שכינתי
לכם...שמא תאמר אין לי מי שעובד אותי כבר יש לי לפני
ר' מאות ותשעים וששה אלפים של מלאכי השרת שהם עומדים
ומקדשים שמי הגדול בכל יום תמיד מיציאת החמה ועד
שקיעתה ואומרים קקק' משקיעת החמה ועד יציאתה ואומרים
ברוך כבוד ה' ממקומו ואין צריך לומר ע' לשון שבארץ
מפני מה אתם עושין דברים מכוערים ודברים שאינן ראויין
מבעטין אתם בייסורין הבאים עליכם אבל מה אעשה הריני
עושה למען שמי הגדול שנקרא עליכם שנ' ואעש למען שמי
לבלתי החל וגו'.

On the number 496,000, cf. *Midrash Vayikra Rabba*, ed. Mordecai Margaliot, (Jerusalem: 1953-1960), I, p. 47.

43. *TB Hagigah*, 13b.

אמר ריש לקיש מאי דכתיב אשירה לה' כי גאה גאה שירה למי
שמתגאה על הגאים דאמר מר מלך שבחיות ארי מלך שבבהמות
שור מלך שבעופות נשר ואדם מתגאה עליהן והקב"ה מתגאה

על כולן ועל כל העולם כולו.

44. Exodus R., 23:13 cites R. Abin as the source, and Canticles R., 3:10 cites R. Abbahu as the source.

45. One may also see in R. Abbahu's interpretation a possible attempt to connect the four creatures of Ezekiel's vision with the four beasts in Daniel, 7. To be sure, the creatures in Ezekiel are part of God's retinue while for the Rabbis, those in Daniel represent the successive empires who would rule over the Jews. Nevertheless, the symbolic meaning of the creatures according to R. Abbahu fits well with Daniel's vision, for the meaning of that vision is the ultimate redemption of Israel from its foes. Cf. Elias Bickerman, Four Strange Books of the Bible (New York: 1967), pp. 100ff. Of course, the fourth beast in Daniel's vision was the Greek empire of Antiochus IV, and not the Romans of R. Abbahu's day. However, post Hellenistic Jewish writers changed the list of empires in order to fit in successor empires and still retain the correct number of four. Cf. Gerson D. Cohen, Sefer Ha-Qabbalah (Philadelphia: 1967), pp. 223ff.

46. Canticles R., 3:20.

תני רשב"י הרקיע של שלג והחיות של אש...ולא זה מכבה
זה ולא זה מכבה זה.

Cf. also ibid. end, for R. Aha's comment mentioning warring groups of people who reconcile their differences in order to do the will of God together.

47. TB Pesahim, 119a.

אמר רב כהנא משום רבי ישמעאל בר יוסי אמר ר"ש בן לקיש
משום רבי יהודה נשיאה מאי דכתיב וידי אדם מתחת כנפיהם
ידו כתיב זה ידו של הקב"ה שפרוסה תחת כנפי החיות כדי
לקבל בעלי תשובה מיד מדת הדין.

The keri in Ezek. 1:8 reads וידי אדם --"And they had the hands of a man".

48. PK, 9:3.

ר' יעקב בר זבדי בשם ר' אבהו פתח ולא יהיה עוד לבית
ישראל למבטח וגו' כת' שרפים עומדים ממעל לו שש כנפים
וגו' בשתים יעופף לקילוס בשתים יכסה פניו שלא להביט
בשכינה בשתים יכסה רגליו שלא יראו פני שכינה דכת'
ורגליהם ככף רגל עגל על שם ולא יהיה עוד לבית ישראל
למבטח מזכיר עון.

The same tradition also appears in Leviticus R., 27:3; Tanhuma (Buber) Emor, 11, p. 90; PRE, end of chapter 4.

For the identification of the heavenly figures in Ezekiel's vision with those of Isaiah's, see above, p. 177.

TB Hagigah, 13b contains an opinion that the feet were covered because it was not seemly to appear before one's master with feet exposed.

49. Mishnah Rosh Hashanah, 3:2.

כל השופרות כשרין חוץ משלפרה מפני שהוא קרן.

UMI

"All shofars are valid save that of the cow since it is a 'horn'".

50. TY Rosh Hashannah, 3, 2, 58d.

כהיא דאמר ר׳ לוי שנייא היא שאין קטיגור נעשה סניגור.

The Babylonian Talmud (Rosh Hashanah, 26a) explains the prohibition by citing a similar ruling:

מפני מה אין כהן גדול נכנס בבגדי זהב לפני ולפנים
לעבוד עבודה לפי שאין קטיגור נעשה סניגור.

"Why does not the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies to perform the service [of the Day of Atonement] in garments of gold? Because the prosecuting attorney cannot become the defense attorney. [i.e. the High Priest had come to pray on behalf of Israel, and golden vestments would defeat his purpose by reminding God of the golden calf]".

51. TB Hagigah, 13b.

אמר ר"ל יחזקאל ביקש עליו רחמים והפכו לכרוב אמר לפניו
רבש"ע קטיגור יעשה סניגור.

52. Leviticus R., 7:1.

אמר ר׳ ישמעאל בר רב נחמן קרוב לתשע מאות שנה היתה
שנאה כבושה בין ישראל לאביהן שבשמים משיצאו ממצרים עד
שעמד יחזקאל הה"ד ואמר אליהם איש שיקוצי עיניו השליכו.

"R. Ishmael the son of R. Nahman said: For almost nine hundred years contention between Israel and its Father in heaven was subdued, from the time of the Exodus until Ezekiel's day, as it says, 'And I said to them, let every man cast away the detestable things of his eyes and do not defile yourselves with the idols of Egypt...(Ezek. 20:7)'".

53. Tosephta Sotah, 6:9.

ומה אברהם שלא נצטוה אלא על מצוה יחידית ירש את הארץ
אנו שציוה אותנו מצוות הרבה אינו דין שנירש את הארץ
מתשובה שיחזקאל משיבן אתה למד כה אמר ה' על הדם תאכלו
זה אבר מן החי ועיניכם תשאו על גילוליכם זו עבודה
זרה ודם תשפכו כמשמעו עמדתם על חרבכם זה הדין וגזל
תועבה זה משכב זכר ואיש את אשת רעהו טמאתם זו גילוי
עריות ומה מצוות שנצטוו בני נח לא עשיתם ואתם אומרים
נירש את הארץ.

"[Israel said to Ezekiel] And if Abraham who was commanded concerning only one commandment [circumcision] inherited the Land, we whom He has given many commandments, how much more so should we inherit the Land. The answer of Ezekiel is instructive: 'You eat with the blood (Ezek. 33:25)'--this refers to your violating the prohibition against eating a limb from a living thing; 'And lift up your eyes to your idols (ibid.)'--this is idolatry; 'And shed blood (ibid.)'--the meaning of this is obvious; 'You stand upon your sword (verse 26)'--this is perversion of justice and theft; 'You perform abominations (ibid.)'--this is sodomy; 'And you defile everyone his neighbor's wife (ibid.)'--this is adultery. You have not even adhered to the Noahide commandments, and you say: we shall inherit the Land!"

This entire section is a Midrash on Ezek. 33:24-26.

54. Numbers R., 9:49.

אשר תשטה אשה תחת אישה האשה המנאפת תחת אישה תקח את
זרים היה הנביא מוכיחם שתחת הקב"ה עבדו עבודת כוכבים
...וקנא את אשתו זה היה בימי יחזקאל שהיו ישראל עובדי
עבודת כוכבים וקנא להם הקב"ה...והעמיד את האשה לפני
ה׳ שהוכיחם יחזקאל על זאת להשיבם להקב"ה ולא הועיל ועשה
לה הכהן זה יחזקאל את כל התורה הזאת שנבאו להם הוא
וירמיה הכהן שיבואו עליהם פרענות...ונקה האיש מעון
זה הקב"ה שניקה את ישראל שלא יעשו לו עוד עון לפניו
שכך אמר להם על ידי יחזקאל וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים
וגו׳...וכשם שמחל להם הקב"ה בעגל ונתרצה להם ושכן בתוכם
והכניסם לארץ כך נבא יחזקאל שכך יעשה הקב"ה לבסוף
שנ׳ ודבר אליהם כה אמר ה׳ אלהים הנה אני לקח...והיה
משכני...כי אני ה׳ מקדש את ישראל בהיות מקדשי בתוכם
לעולם.

"'When a wife goes astray (Num. 5:29)'--In the text, 'The wife that commits adultery (Ezek. 16:32)', the prophet rebuked them for serving idols instead of the Holy One, blessed be He...'And be jealous over his wife (Num. 5:30)'--this was in the days of Ezekiel when Israel worshipped idols and God was jealous...'Then shall he set the woman before the Lord (ibid.)'--Ezekiel rebuked them in order to make them return to God but to no avail; 'And the priest shall (ibid.)'--this is Ezekiel; 'Execute upon her all this law (ibid.)'--He and Jeremiah prophesied that punishment would come upon them...'And the man shall be clear of iniquity (verse 31)'--this refers to God who will cleanse Israel so that they will no longer sin before Him, for thus did He say to them through Ezekiel: 'And I will sprinkle clean water upon you (Ezek. 36:25ff)'--...just as God pardoned them for the calf and was reconciled with them and dwelt among them and brought them into the Land, so, Ezekiel prophesied, God would do so again, as it says: 'And say to them, Thus says the Lord God, behold I will take...My dwelling place shall be over them...for I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel when my sanctuary will be in the midst of them forever (Ezek. 37:21ff)'".

55. Siphre on Numbers Shelach, pp. 35a-b.

כענין שאמרו ישראל ליחזקאל ש׳ יצאו אלי אנשים מזקני ישראל וישבו לפני אמרו לו עבד שמכרו רבו לא יצא מרשותו אמר להם הן אמרו לו הואיל שמכרנו המקום לאומות העולם [יצאו מרשותו] אמר להם הרי עבד שמכרו רבו על מנת לחזור שמא יצא חוץ לרשותו והעולה על רוחכם היה לא תהיה אשר אתם אומרים נהיה כגוים אשר סביבותינו וכמשפחות הארמה לשרת עץ ואבן חי אני נאם ה׳ אם לא ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה ובחימה שפוכה אמלוך עליכם.

"As is said concerning Israel who spoke to Ezekiel, as it says, 'Certain of the elders of Israel came and sat before me (Ezek. 20:1)'--they said to him:

Does not a slave whose master has sold him go free? He replied: Yes. They said: Since God has delivered us to the nations [we are no longer his]. He replied: Has a slave whose master has sold him conditionally really been sold! 'And that which enters your mind shall not be in that you say: We will be as the nations around us and as the families of the earth who worship wood and stone. As I live, says God, I will be King over you with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with fury poured out (Ezek. 20:32-33)'".

The text of the Biblical verses in this section differs slightly from the Massoretic text.

The same legend appears in a somewhat modified form in Tanhuma (Buber) Nizavim, 7, p. 50. In this source, the reason given for the invalidity of the slave's sale is that the master had not sold him for money (i.e. he only lent him out). Cf. Isa. 52:3.

56. Ruth R., 2:2.

...זה ירמיה ויחזקאל שהתפללו לפני הקב"ה שלא להחריב בית
המקדש.

57. Tanhuma Zav, 14.

א"ר שמואל בר אבא אמר הקב"ה לישראל אע"פ שבית המקדש
עתיד ליחרב והקרבנות בטלין לא תשכחו עצמכם לסדר
הקרבנות אלא הזהרו לקרות בהן ולשנות בהן ואם תעסקו
בהן אני מעלה עליכם כאלו בקרבנות אתם עוסקים ואם

רצונך לידע בא וראה כשהקב"ה מראה ליחזקאל את צורת הבית
מה הוא אומר הגד את בית ישראל את הבית ויכלמו מעונותיהם
ומדדו את תכנית אמר יחזקאל לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע עד עכשיו
אנו נתונים בגולה בארץ שונאינו ואתה אומר לי לילך
ולהודיע לישראל צורת הבית וכתוב אותו לעיניהם וישמרו
את כל צורותיו ואת כל חוקותיו וכי יכולין הן לעשות
הניח להם עד שיעלו מן הגולה ואח"כ אני הולך ואומר להם
א"ל הקב"ה ליחזקאל ובשביל שבני נתונים בגולה יהא בנין
ביתי בטל א"ל הקב"ה גדול קרייתה בתורה כבנינה לך אמור
להם יתעסקו לקרות צורת הבית בתורה בשכר קרייתה שיתעסקו
לקרות בה אני מעלה עליהם כאלו הם עוסקין בבנין הבית.

The same idea is expressed in Leviticus R., 7:3.

58. TB Sanhedrin, 39a.

א"ל ההוא מינא לרבי אבהו אלהיכם גחכן הוא דקאמר ליה
ליחזקאל שכב על צדך השמאלי וכתיב ושכבת על צדך הימיני
...מנהגו של עולם מלך בשר ודם שסרחה עליו מדינה אם
אכזרי הוא הורג את כולן אם רחמן הוא הורג חצים אם רחמן
מלא רחמים הוא מייסר הגדולים שבהן ביסורין אף כך הקב"ה
מייסר את יחזקאל כדי למרק עונותיהם של ישראל.

59. PK, 8:4.

...ואתה קח לך חיטים ושעורים ופול ועדשים ודוחן וכוסמין
ונתתה אותם בכלי אחד ועשית אותם לך ללחם ואמר ר' חמא בר
חנינה ריבה בה שעורים ר' שמואל בר נחמן אמר דברים שהיו
מריצים את בני מעיים שמואל אמר תמן אמרין עבדין מנה
חררה לכלבה ולא טעמי מטרונא שאלה את ר' יוסי בן חלפתא
אמרה לו כמה צער נצטער אותו הצדיק כמה עבדים כמה
שפחות יש לו והן מבזבזין במאכל ובמשתה אמר לה

להוריעך שככל מקום שישראל בצער הצדיקים החיים עמהם
כצער.

For parallels, see *Leviticus R.*, 28:6 and *PR*, 18, p. 92b-93a. For the concept that God too suffers, as it were, with Israel, see below, p. 260.

60. *Pesikta De-Rab Kahanna*, trans. William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein (Philadelphia: 1975), p. 162, n. 36. For more on the idea of the suffering of great men for the sake of Israel, cf. Solomon Schechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: 1961), pp. 310-311.

61. *Leviticus R.*, 2:8.

...אדם זה לשון חבה ולשון אחוה ולשון רעות אמר הקב"ה
ליחזקאל בן אדם בן אנשים כשרים בן גומלי חסדים בן
שמבזים את עצמן על כבודו של מקום ועל כבודן של ישראל
כל ימיו.

Cf. also *Seder Eliahu Rabba*, 6.

62. *Ruth R.*, 2:1.

עשרה כהנים ונביאים עמדו מרחב הזונה ירמיה חלקיה שריה
מחסיה חנמאל שלום ברוך נריה יחזקאל בוזי.

However, neither *TB Megillah*, 14b nor *Siphre to Numbers Behaalotecha*, 78 mention Ezekiel among eight prophets descended from Rahab. *PK*, 13:12 mentions Ezekiel as one of four men descended from blemished stock. The others are Phinehas, Uriah, and Jeremiah. The *aggadah* maintains that Rahab became a proselyte and married Joshua. Cf. *TB Megillah*, 14b.

63. PK, 13:12.

יחזקאל ישראל היו מזלזלין אחריו ואומרים לא מבני בניה
של רחב הזונה הוא וצריך הכתוב לייחסו היה היה דבר ה׳ אל
יחזקאל בן בוזי הכהן.

64. Cf. TB Sanhedrin, 90b-92b. Cf. Also G.F. Moore, Judaism, II, pp. 381ff. Herford explains the Rabbinic attempts to find Scriptural proof for the resurrection as a counter to Christian claims that resurrection was consequent on the resurrection of Jesus. R.T. Herford, Christianity in Talmud and Midrash, pp. 232-233.

To be sure, verses from Ezekiel are cited in Rabbinic discussions of the resurrection. Cf. TB Ketubot, 111a; TY Ketubot, 12, 3, 35b; TY Kilaim, 9, 4, 32c and Ecclesistes R., 1:4. However, none of these sources derives the belief in resurrection from Ezekiel. Instead, they discuss peripheral matters such as the manner of the resurrection and how those buried outside of the land of Israel will be brought back.

65. TB Sanhedrin, 92b.

ר׳ יהודה אומר אמת משל היה...ר׳ אליעזר בנו של ר׳ יוסי
הגלילי אומר מתים שהחיה יחזקאל עלו לארץ ישראל ונשאו
נשים והולידו בנים ובנות עמד רבי יהודה בן בתירא על
רגליו ואמר אני מבני בניהם והללו תפילין שהניח לי
אבי אבא מהם.

66. *Ibid*.

רבי אליעזר אומר מתים שהחיה יחזקאל עמדו על רגליהם
ואמרו שירה ומתו.

67. *PRE*, 33 end.

כאותו שעה היו ישראל בוכים ואומרים היינו מקוים לעמוד
עם כל ישראל בתחיית המתים עכשיו אבדה תקותינו.

68. *Genesis R.*, 14:5.

בית שמאי אומרים לא כשם שיצירתו בעולם הזה יצירתו
לעולם הבא כעולם הזה מתחיל בעור ובבשר...אבל לעתיד
לבוא מתחיל בגידים ובעצמות...אמר ר׳ יונתן אין למדין
ממתי יחזקאל ולמה היו מתי יחזקאל דומים לזה שנכנס
למרחץ מה שהוא פושט ראשון הוא לובש אחרון בית הלל
אומרים כשם שיצירתו בעולם הזה כך יצירתו לעולם
הבא...

Cf. also *Leviticus R.*, 14:9.

69. *TB Sanhedrin*, 92b.

ומאן נינהו מתים שהחיה יחזקאל אמר רב אלו בני אפרים
שמנו לקץ וטעו.

The Ephramites miscalculated by counting the four hundred years of Egyptian captivity (Gen. 15:13) beginning with the time when God imparted this message to Abraham. According to tradition, the four hundred years were to begin thirty years later with the birth of Isaac. Cf. L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, III, pp. 8-9 and VI, pp. 2-3, n. 10 and 11.

This tradition may possibly be an anti-Christian polemic. M. Aberbach has suggested that it may be directed against Bar Kochba.

70. Ibid.

ושמואל אמר אלו בני אדם שכפרו בתחיית המתים.

Contrast with Mishnah Sanhedrin, 10:1:

ואלו שאין להם חלק לעולם הבא האומר אין תחיית המתים
מן התורה...

"And these have no share in the world to come: he who says resurrection is not prescribed in the Torah". Some texts omit the words "in the Torah". Cf. Shisha Sidre Mishnah: Seder Nezikin, ed. Hanoch Albeck (Jerusalem: 1959), p. 202, n. 1.

71. TB Sanhedrin, 92b.

ר' ירמיה בר אבא אמר אלו בני אדם שאין בהן לחלוחית
של מצוה...

72. Ibid.

ר' יצחק נפחא אמר אלו בני אדם שחיפו את ההיכל כולו שקצים
ורמשים.

"R. Isaac Nappaha said: They were people who had covered the Temple with [pictures of] abominations and crawling things".

73. An opposite view is found in PRE, 33 where it says that one of the dead was not resurrected--a usurer. This may be based on Ezek. 18:13.

74. Ecclesiastes R., 8:13.

ובכן ראיתי רשעים קבורים ובאו א"ר יהודה בר סימון
אם במתי יחזקאל הוא אומר הלא כבר נאמר רשעים ואותן
לא היו אלא צדיקים.

"'And so I saw the wicked buried and they entered their rest (Eccles. 8:10)'--R. Judah bar Simon said: If you wish to apply this verse to the dead whom Ezekiel resurrected, the verse says "wicked" and those [resurrected by Ezekiel] were righteous".

75. Ibid., 4:7 end.

ר׳ יהודה בר סימון פתח קרייא ביחזקאל בשעה שעמד על
הבקעה ואמר העצמות היבשות שמעו דבר ה׳ מיד ותקרבו
עצמות...אמר להם בתחלה אמרתי לכם שמעו דבר ה׳ בית
יעקב ולא שמעתם בחייכם לא שמעתם במיתתכם שמעתם על
אותה שעה נאמר ושבח אני את המתים...

"R. Judah bar Simon began his discourse by citing Ezekiel--at the time he stood in the valley and said: 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord (Ezek. 37:4)'. Immediately, 'And the bones came together (verse 7)'... He said to them: At first I told you, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob (Jer. 2:4)', and you did not listen. When you were alive you did not listen, but now that you are dead you listen. Concerning that time it is stated, 'I have praised the dead more than the living (Eccles. 4:2)'".

76. TB Sanhedrin, 92b.

ר׳ יוחנן אמר אלו מתים שבבקעת דורא...שבשעה שהגלה
נבוכדנצר הרשע את ישראל היו בחורים שהיו מגנין את
החמה ביופיין והיו כשדיות רואות אותן ושופעות זבות
אמרו לבעליהן ובעליהן למלך צוה המלך והרגום ועדיין
היו שופעות זבות צוה המלך ורמסום.

77. Ibid.

תנו רבנן בשעה שהפיל נבוכדנצר הרשע את חנניה מישאל
ועזריה לכבשן האש אמר לו הקב"ה ליחזקאל לך והחייה מתים
בבקעת דורא.

78. PRE, 33.

הייתם יודעים שיש לכם אלוה משזיב ומציל למה הנחתם
אלהיכם והשתחויתם לגלולים שאין בו כח להציל אלא כדרך
שעשיתם בארצכם והחרבתם אותה כך אתם מבקשים לעשות
בארצי להחריב אותה.

79. Only Seder Eliahu Rabba presents Ezekiel in a favorable light stating that the miracle of the resurrection was worked through Ezekiel because of his devotion to and concern for Israel. Cf. Seder Eliahu Rabba, 5.

ומפני מה זכה יחזקאל שיחיו מתים על ידו מפני שהיה
מסתפח על ישראל בכל שעה ושעה...

80. Canticles R., 7:13.

נבוכדנצר העמיד צלם והפריש מכל אומה ואומה שלשה שלשה
ושלשה מכל ישראל וחנניה מישאל ועזריה...עמדו ומיחו על
עצמן ולא עבדו עבודה זרה הלכו להם אצל דניאל...אמר להם
הנה הנביא לפניכם לכו אצלו...אמר להם כבר מקובל אני
מישעיה רבי חבי כמעט רגע עד יעבור זעם...אמרו ליה...
אמרין הדין צלמא כל אומיא סגדי ליה לבר מישראל אמר
להם...המתינו לי עד שאמלוך בגבורה...אמר ליה איני
מתקיים עליהם...אמרו לו בין מתקיים בין שאין מתקיים
אנו נותנין נפשותינו על קדושת שמו...

81. R. Simeon bar Yohai, a pupil of R. Akiba, was clearly

alluding to the martyrs of his own time, i.e. of the Hadrianic persecution. He was a bitter opponent of the Romans, and when they imprisonned Akiba for violating the prohibition against teaching the Torah publicly, he continued to study with his teacher in prison. It is somewhat ironic that R. Simeon who glorifies the would-be martyrs, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, himself fled and hid in a cave for twelve years after speaking insultingly of the Roman administration. Cf. M. Margaliot, Enzyklopedia le-Hachme ha-Talmud ve-ha-Geonim, pp. 839-844.

82. M. Aberbach has suggested that in this story, Ezekiel may be a disguise for R. Jose bar Kisma who advised caution during the Hadrianic persecution. Cf. TB Avodah Zarah, 18a.

83. PRE, 33.

שרתה רוח הקדש על יחזקאל והוציאו לבקעת דורא והראהו
עצמות יבשות הרבה מאד אמר לו בן אדם מה אתה רואה אמר
לו אני רואה כאן עצמות יבשות אמר לו יש בי כח להחיות
אותן לא אמר הנביא רבונו של עולם יש בך כח לעשות יותר
מאילו אלא אמר ה׳ אלהים אתה ידעת כאלו לא האמין.

84. Ibid.

אמר לפניו רבש"ע מה הנבואה מביאה עליהם בשר וגידים
ועצמות או כל בשר ועצם שאכלו מהם בהמה וחיה ועוף ממנו...

85. Genesis R., 19:11.

אמר ר׳ חנינא בר פפא לצפור שהיתה נתונה ביד ציר פגע באחד

אמר לו זו שבידי מה היא חיה או מתה אמר לו אי בעית חיה
אי בעית מתה כך כן אדם התחיינה העצמות האלה ואמר ה'
אלהים אתה ידעת.

This *Midrash* compares Ezekiel favorably with four others who gave inappropriate answers to questions God had asked them: Adam, Cain, Balaam, and Hezekiah. Cf. also *ARN(B)*, 45, p. 125.

86. *TB Sanhedrin*, 92b.

תנו רבנן ששה נסים נעשו באותו היום ואלו הן צף הכבשן
ונפרץ הכבשן והומק סודו ונהפך צלם על פניו ונשרפו ארבע
מלכיות והחייה יחזקאל את המתים בבקעת דורא.

Canticles R. does not mention the foundations of the furnace crumbling from heat. In its stead the third miracle is that Nebuchadnezzar was half burnt.

87. *Ibid.*, 92b.

כיון שהחייה אותן באו עצמות וטפחו לו לאותו רשע על
פניו אמר מה טיבן של אלו אמרו לו חבריהן של אלו
מחיה מתים בבקעת דורא פתח ואמר אתוהי כמה רברבין
...מלכותיה מלכות עלם... (Daniel 3:33) א"ר יצחק
יוצק זהב רותח לתוך פיו של אותו רשע שאילמלא בא
מלאך וסטרו על פיו ביקש לגנות כל שירות ותשבחות
שאמר דוד בספר תהלים.

88. Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance*, p. 92.

89. Cf. *TB Avodah Zarah*, 18a.

90. Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, VII, 9.

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91. Nebuchadnezzar is convinced of God's power by His rescue of the three lads (cf. above, p. 195). Tanhuma Noah, 10 also contains this theme. In these sources, the king praises God after the three lads are saved. Cf. Daniel 3:32-33.

92. J. Katz notes that the concern with Gentile reaction to Jewish martyrdom seems to be primarily a medieval phenomenon. In Talmudic times, Jewish martyrology was viewed basically as a matter between the Jews and God. However, the pre-medieval examples we have cited, and the connection of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah with Ezekiel's resurrection of the dry bones indicate that the medieval attitude had deep ancient roots. Cf. J. Katz, Exclusiveness and Tolerance, pp. 82ff.

CHAPTER V

JEREMIAH AND THE PROPHETIC AGONY

JEREMIAH AS CHASTISER

Rabbinic literature presents Jeremiah as a more tragic personality than any other major prophet. His prophecies reflected the calamities of his time. He was, of course, the prophet of the Destruction, and while other prophets had rebuked the people and warned of the coming disaster, it was Jeremiah's fate to be the prophet whose words of doom were realized in his own lifetime. Quite naturally, this handicap colored much of Rabbinic thinking about the prophet.

A number of Rabbinic sources emphasize the harsh and reproachful aspect of Jeremiah's ministry. Thus, he who sees the book of Jeremiah in a dream will suffer some kind of misfortune.[1] As we have already seen, one source contrasted the chastising Jermiah with the comforting Isaiah by countering all of the calamaties mentioned by Jeremiah with prophecies of comfort from Isaiah.[2] In another source, R. Eleazar singled out Jeremiah as the only prophet whose last prophecy consisted of words of reproof:

> R. Eleazar said: All prophets begin with words of reproof, but all conclude with words of comfort, except Jeremiah who concludes with words of reproof saying, "Thus shall Babylon sink,

and shall not rise again (Jer. 51:64)".[3]

To be sure R. Eleazar's view did not go without challenge. R. Johanan, interpreting the same verse, reached a different conclusion. According to this sage, since the verse was prophesying the destruction of Babylon, Israel's enemy, it was a message of comfort.[4] Jeremiah, therefore, did not differ from the other prophets, and like them, he concluded with words of comfort. Despite R. Johanan's rejoinder, the Rabbis' stress on the reproachful tone of Jeremiah's prophecies is quite clear. It is, in fact, the underlying theme of a number of comments dealing with Jeremiah's name, genealogy, and the superscription to his book.

Jeremiah's Name

The Rabbis saw in Jeremiah's name, his genealogy and the superscription to his book, symbolic representations of his prophecies of catastrophe. One comment derives his name from the Greek _eremos_, "destitute," for in his days the Temple was destroyed.[5] Another comment explains the prophet's name as "the Lord rises," meaning that, in Jeremiah's day, God's attribute of justice rose against Israel.[6] In yet another explanation, the name Jeremiah is interpreted as an acrostic meaning that in ten stages the Divine Presence journeyed up and away from the Temple.[7]

Jeremiah's Genealogy

Rabbinic comments on Jeremiah's genealogy are used several times to portray Israel in a poor light. We have already seen that Rabbinic tradition recorded Jeremiah among those of blemished ancestry.[8] Descended from Rahab, the prophet suffered from the taunts of his contemporaries. In order to spare Jeremiah this embarrassment, Scripture recorded that he was of the tribe of Levi, the son of Hilkiah the priest. Alluding to the fact that the tribe of Levi had been specially designated by God for the divine service and therefore received no portion of land, R. Judah bar R. Simon explained the significance of Jeremiah's ancestry: "Jeremiah was of that tribe to which God said: 'I am your portion and your inheritance (Num. 18:20)'".[9] The mocking of Jeremiah by his countrymen is not the only association of Jeremiah's genealogy with Israel's sins. R. Abba bar Kahana contrasted Rahab, the "shameless woman who made her deeds comely" with Israel, the son of a comely woman who made his deeds shamless. This Rabbi found in every Biblical reference praising Rahab a reproach to Israel.[10] Thus, Jeremiah, the descendant of Rahab embodied in his own person a denunciation of Israel. Another comment, critical of the mercy shown by the Israelites to Rahab and her family (Josh. 6:23), explains that since the Israelites had violated God's command to destroy the inhabitants of

Canaan (Deut. 20:17), Jeremiah "will spring from the children's children of Rahab the harlot and will thrust such words into you as will be thorns in your eyes and pricks in your sides (Num. 33:55)".[11] Again, Jeremiah's descent from Rahab is used to underline Israel's sin and Jeremiah's role as chastiser.

Even Jeremiah's tribal lineage carried with it a portent of gloom. Commenting on the words, "the land of Benjamin" in the superscription to the book (1:1), a Rabbinic statement declares that until Benjamin, the last of his sons, was born, it was not certain that Jacob would father twelve tribes. So, too, with Jeremiah--"despite all the prophets who prophesied against Jerusalem, their prophecies did not become a certainty until Jeremiah rose up".[12]

Superscription to the Book

Not only in Jeremiah's name and genealogy, but also in the superscription to his book did the Rabbis see portents of disaster. Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabba observes that there were three prophets whose prophecies were attributed directly to them rather than to God. These were Koheleth, (i.e., the Preacher in Ecclesiastes), Amos and Jeremiah. Their books lacked the more customary introduction, "The word of the Lord that came to..." (cf. Joel 1:1; Micah 1:1) because their prophecies were essentially words of reproach.[13] Pesikta De Rab Kahanna contains a number of statements that also interpret the introductory phrase, "the words of Jeremiah" as being a harsh foretaste of the prophet's message. The phrase is variously explained as the "direful words,"[14] "sharp words,"[15] and the "reproving words"[16] of Jeremiah. Another tradition states that whenever the stem dbr is used with the connotation of stern words, it intimates that execrations and rebukes are to follow. Among the examples cited is Jeremiah 1:1 (the curses are found in 43:11).[17] Another comment connecting the "words of Jeremiah" with the curses mentioned in 43:11 derives dbr from deber "pestilence." Thus, Jer. 1:1 could be rendered, "The pestilence-laden words of Jeremiah".[18]

Two comments interpret the phrase to refer to punishment that will come to Israel because they had violated God's words. One depicts God as saying to Jeremiah:

> Go, say to Israel, "Turn in repentence, else I will destroy My Temple". Thereupon the children of Israel said [to one another]: And if He does destroy His Temple, will He not have destroyed what is His, [not what is ours]? To this the Holy One replied: Behold, I am going to destroy My Temple, and My word through Jeremiah [concerning the destruction of what is yours] shall also be fulfilled.[19]

The second comment has "the words" refer to the Ten Commandments. God complains to Jeremiah that Israel has violated each of these "words".[20] In these two comments, "the words" are those of God rather than those of the prophet.

JEREMIAH'S RELUCTANCE

While the Rabbis portrayed Jeremiah as a harsh prophet, they recognized that he derived no satisfaction from his task. With the exception of Moses, Jeremiah is the only one of the major Biblical prophets to express reluctance at his calling. Unlike Isaiah who seemed overly eager to accept God's summons[21] and Ezekiel who seemed overwhelmed by it, Jeremiah sought to escape it. A late Midrash, Pesikta Rabbati, relates that Jeremiah rebelled against his God-assigned mission from the very moment of his birth. Ascribing Jeremiah's painful cry, "My insides, my insides! I writhe in pain! The chambers of my heart! My heart moans within me," to the time of his birth, this Midrash attributes the prophet's agony to his mission of preaching destruction. God sought to overcome Jeremiah's reluctance by assuring him that He had designated him for this task even before he was born (1:5). Jeremiah, however, refused to accept this designation and argued that Israel would never take to heart his words of warning. He cited Moses whom the people had sought to slay and Elijah and Elisha whom the people had scorned. Moreover, pleaded the prophet, "I cannot speak; I am a child (1:6)". God reassured the prophet and commanded him to take the cup of wrath and make the nations drink with Jeruslaem and the cities of Judah getting the first taste. The prophet, confronted with his destiny, appointed by God to tell his people of its doom, and unable to resist the divine summons any longer, bitterly cursed the day of his birth (20:14).[22]

The Rabbis understood the compelling nature of God's summons to the prophet. According to another late Midrash, they applied the verse "But He is at one with Himself, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires that He does (Job 23:13)" to Balaam, Jonah, Jeremiah and Moses. Each of these, against his will, was compelled to submit to God's command. Balaam sought to curse Israel, but could not ignore the divine command to bless her. Jonah, Jeremiah and Moses unsuccessfully tried to avoid God's call to prophecy. Each of them recognized the tribulations involved in the prophetic calling, yet none could escape it.[23]

Jeremiah's reluctance which remained with him throughout his career, reached a climax during the reign of Zedekiah. By that time, Zion realized that the destruction was approaching quickly. The prophet complained to God that he was the one among all the prophets who had to announce the coming destruction. Mingling among the people in Jerusalem, Jeremiah almost apologetically went about his task. When the people told him not to prophesy in God's name, Jeremiah answered:

> I, too, do not wish to mention His name. But what can I do? It is in my heart like a burning fire, I am like a woman seated on her birthstool. If I say: "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name, then there is in my

> heart as it were a burning fire; it is
> tightly held in my bones (Jer. 20:9)".[24]

Rebel as he might, the prophet had no choice.

JEREMIAH'S AGONY: THE PROPHETIC DILEMMA

The most pronounced characteristic of Jeremiah's prophetic career was the agony which his mission caused him. Caught between his love for Israel and his charge to declare her doom, Jeremiah epitomized the prophetic dilemma to a degree unparalled in any other prophet. The Rabbis understood this clearly, and succintly pinpointed it when they said that Jeremiah was insistent upon the honor due both God and Israel:

> Thus you find that there were three types of prophets. One insisted upon the honor due The Father as well as the honor due to the son; one insisted upon the honor due the Father without insisting upon the honor due the son; and one insisted upon the honor due the son without insisting upon the honor due the Father.[25]

In this statement, the Father, of course, refers to God and the son, to Israel. Jeremiah is the prophet who insisted upon the honor due both. Quoting Lamentations 3:42, "We have transgressed and have rebelled; You have not pardoned," this Midrash interprets both parts of the verse as accusations. The first part refers to Israel's guilt; the second is read as an indictment of God. God did not pardon Israel whereas He should have done so. For his insistence on maintaining the proper balance between

God's claim to Israel's obedience and Israel's claim to God's forgiveness, Jeremiah merited a double portion of prophetic power. It was precisely this--Jeremiah's sympathy for and ability to understand both God's perspective and that of Israel--that caused him his greatest suffering.

Jeremiah's dilemma became evident from the very beginning. According to a late Midrash, the prophet's first spoken words were a castigation of his mother for harlotry, and a challenge to her to drink the "water of bitterness (cf. Num. 5:11-31)". Amazed at these words, Jeremiah's mother asked why he was speaking in such a way. The child replied: "I speak not of you, mother; I assure you, mother, not of you. I prophesy of [Mother] Zion--of [Mother] Jerusalem."[26] Jeremiah here personalizes his task. His own mother becomes Mother Zion. Jeremiah blends his own personality into that of his people, and at times, the two become one; their suffering is his suffering.

R. Gordis employs the term "fluid personality" to describe this phenomenon as it appears in Biblical literature. Gordis explains that:

> The concept of "fluid personality" is generally assumed to be based on the idea of primitive psychology as propounded by Levi-Brühl and E. Durkheim. In early thought the highly defined individualism characteristic of modern man had not yet emerged. Hence the individual is both representative of his group and merges and disappears within it.[27]

UMI

It is this "fluid personality" through which the prophet identifies with God when he speaks of Him in the first person. When speaking of God in the third person, he has disassociated himself from God and speaks solely out of his own personality. So too, the prophet's fluid personality allows him to identify with the people of Israel. Thus, argues Gordis, the shifting from the singular to the plural in prophetic literature and Psalms is caused by the prophet or psalmist moving back and forth between his own individual vantage point and the people into whom he blends his individual identity.[28] This shifting back and forth makes it "often impossible to find the line of demarcation between the individual and the nation, since both aspects of the poet's concern are blended together".[29]

The prophet's dilemma--his being trapped by his conflicting sympathies and loyalties to God and Israel--may also be at the basis of the Rabbinic comparison of Jeremiah to Moses. The Rabbis noted a number of similarities between Jeremiah and the master of prophets, Moses. The Palestinian Amora, R. Judah bar R. Simon, sought to resolve the contradiction between Deut. 18:18, "I will raise them up a prophet like you from amongst their brethren," and Deut. 34:10, "And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses". R. Judah explained that the "prophet like you" was Jeremiah, a prophet like Moses in delivering rebukes to Israel. The Midrash, commenting on R. Judah's statement, draws further parallels between the two prophets. Both prophesied for forty years, and both prophesied concerning Judah and Israel. Both also experienced the wrath of their people: the tribe of Levi (i.e. Korah and his followers) rose against Moses, while the people of Anathoth rose against Jeremiah. Moses was cast into a river, and Jeremiah was thrown into a pit. A female servant saved the former while a male servant rescued the latter.[30] Still other resemblances are cited in later sources.[31] While most of these comparisons stress the tensions between Moses and Jeremiah and their societies, there is another characteristic shared by both prophets. The Bible describes Moses as it describes Jeremiah--a prophet whose love for God is matched by his love for his people. Moses and Jeremiah prayed for their people when God was angry with them. When God declared His intention to destroy Israel after the incident of the golden calf and create a new people out of Moses, the prophet refused to accept the divine verdict and told God that if He would destroy the whole people, He should destroy him too.[32] Jeremiah, like the "father of the prophets," is the victim of conflicting loves.

JEREMIAH REJECTED BY HIS GENERATION

Prophets are seldom honored in their own times, and Jeremiah had more than his share of difficulties with his contemporaries. The Rabbis described Jeremiah's generation as a sinful one. According to R. Hanina bar Isaac, the early fourth century Palestinian Amora, their depravity caused God to loosen the fetters which had held the patron angels of the nations in check since the days of Isaac's binding, thus allowing Israel's enemies to prevail against her.[33] In another source, God condemns the people for violating each of the Ten Commandments.[34] Numbers Rabba accuses them of adultery, the sin which sealed their doom. When Jeremiah protested to God that, although Israel had sinned more in the days of Manasseh, their punishment was meted out in his generation, God replied that whereas the people of Manasseh's generation had sinned, they were still the children of their fathers. Such was not the case among Jeremiah's contemporaries.[35] Pesikta Rabbati describes the women of Jerusalem who would strut around and call attention to themselves by clapping their hands and tinkling the ornaments on their feet (Isa. 3:16). The men are compared to well-fed stallions who neigh after the women (Jer. 5:8).[36] Even the religious leadership--the priests--sinned by forsaking the commandment of circumcision.[37]

Late Midrashic literature describes Jeremiah's efforts to save his generation and the refusal of the people to heed his words. Thus, he held up the idols to

UMI

ridicule, and contrasted their inability to act with God's redeeming powers in the hope of convincing his countrymen of the folly of idolatry.[38] The people, however, did not listen to Jeremiah's preaching. They told him instead: "Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord (Jer. 11:21)".[39] Moreover, they mocked him because of his ancestry.[40] The people ignored Jeremiah's warnings because they were certain that no harm could befall the city. They told Jeremiah that the aid of the protecting angels would assure Jerusalem's inviolability.[41]

Jeremiah not only urged repentance, but assured the people that God was ready to forgive. A tradition in the name of R. Meir compares Israel to the sinful son of a king:

> The king sent a tutor to him who appealed to him saying, "Repent, my son". The son, however, sent back to his father with the message, "How can I have the effrontry to return? I am ashamed to come before you". Thereupon his father sent back word, "My son, is a son ever ashamed to return to his father? And is it not to your father that you will be returning?"[42]

So too, God commanded Jeremiah to tell the people to repent. They, however, were too ashamed because of their sins to ask God's forgiveness. God then had the prophet reassure the people telling them that they were returning to their father who was always ready to receive them back. The late fourth century Palestinian Amora, R. Azariah, expressed the same thought when he explained that God told Jeremiah to assure the people that He still reciprocated the love which Israel expressed for Him at Sinai.[43]

Moreover, God Himself had sought Israel's repentance for a full ninety years before the destruction of the First Temple. During this time God sent two prophets daily, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, to warn Israel to repent. According to one view, Jeremiah accompanied these prophets on their daily mission.[44] According to another opinion, in addition to Jeremiah, the prophet Zephaniah and the prophetess Huldah forewarned the people of the coming disaster. Zephaniah prophesied in the synagogues, Jeremiah in the city streets, and Huldah among the women.[45]

Despite his efforts, Jeremiah was unable to move his people to repentance. His warnings ignored, an object of derision, the prophet suffered greatly from the rejection of his contemporaries. He complained bitterly that he did not receive the respect due a priest. God had caused him to pervert the traditional priestly blessing of peace into a curse of doom:

> In the days of Moses, priests were told to say, "The Lord bless you (Num. 6:24)"; but in my days, said Jeremiah, I am told "Of them shall be taken up a curse (Jer. 29:22)" ...In the days of Moses, "and give you peace (Num. 6:26)"; but in my days, "I have taken away My peace from this people, says the Lord, even mercy and compassion (Jer. 16:5)".[46]

The prophet's suffering was so intense that on occasion he prayed to God for vengeance against his enemies.

The Talmud interprets Jeremiah's plea to God to destroy his enemies (18:18-23) as the result of charges of sexual immorality that had been levelled against him. R. Eleazar explained that people accused Jeremiah of having illicit relations with a harlot. R. Samuel b. Nahmani said that the prophet was charged with having relations with another man's wife.[47] In his anger, Jeremiah prayed that God give no opportunity to the people to earn merit. Even when they give charity, God should have them give this charity to people who are unworthy so that they receive no reward for this good deed.[48]

While Jeremiah's society was a corrupt one, its leaders failed to provide it with an example of good leadership. With the exception of Josiah,[49] the kings of Judah looked upon Jeremiah with a mixture of fearful respect, suspicion and mistrust. King Johoiakim ordered the scroll containing Jeremiah's words burnt (36:23ff).[50] During the reign of Zedekiah, Irijah, the grandson of the false prophet Hananiah ben Azzur (cf. ch. 28) imprisoned Jeremiah on the charge of treason. Zedekiah sent for the prophet to ask if there was any word from God. Jeremiah's answer was harsh: "There is word: the king of Babylon will send you into exile". Sensing the king's anger, Jeremiah called the king's attention to his mistreatment, and asked why the king was not angry at the false prophets who had claimed that the Babylonians would not attack

Jerusalem. Zedekiah, perhaps recognizing the justice of Jeremiah's words, granted the prophet's request to be removed from Irijah's charge and placed him in the court of the guard. However, certain of the governmental officials were determined to see the prophet who preached treason killed. The weak king, who floundered between fear of Jeremiah and hatred for his harsh words, yielded to his officials and handed over the prophet to them. They cast him into a pit filled with water, but through a miracle the water sank to the bottom and the mud rose thereby supporting Jeremiah and preventing him from drowning. Jeremiah was saved from the pit through the efforts of Ebed-Melech who told the king that if Jeremiah died in the pit the city would fall to the Babylonians.[51]

Zedekiah, like the people as a whole, came to recognize the truth of Jeremiah's prophecies only after disaster had come. After the fall of Jerusalem, the king was captured. Before being taken to Babylon, he saw his sons killed before his eyes and then he was blinded. Only then did the deposed king acknowledge the correctness of Jeremiah's warning:

> Jeremiah prophesied truly about me when he said to me: You will go to Babylon and in Babylon you will die, but your eyes will not have seen Babylon. I would not listen to his words. And here I am in Babylon and my eyes do not see it.[52]

Jeremiah's estrangement from his society was so great that some Jewish sources indicate the existence of a tradition that the prophet was killed by his people. Vitae Prophetarum states that the people stoned Jeremiah in Egypt.[53] Paraleipomena of Jeremiah, probably a work of Jewish origin but containing an admixture of Christian additions, records that the people stoned Jeremiah in Jerusalem because he prophesied the coming of Jesus.[54] While this is obviously a Christian story, whether or not it is based on Jewish tradition is not precisely clear. L. Ginsberg and O. Komlos believe that the legend of Jeremiah's martyrdom is of Jewish origin.[55] They base their view on the one source in Rabbinic literature that mentions Jeremiah's martyrdom. A statement in the Midrash Aggada, a late collection, relates that:

> The Jews in Egypt stoned Jeremiah, but his body was buried by the Egyptians who loved him because through his prayers the crocodiles disappeared from the Nile and ceased to ravage the country.[56]

JEREMIAH AND JOSIAH

Of all the kings during whose reigns he prophesied, Jeremiah maintained a good relationship with the righteous king Josiah.[57] It was in his days that Jeremiah attempted to bring back the ten tribes and thus effect one step in the redemption of Israel.[58] However, the generation of Josiah was not ready for redemption, and the people did not accept the king's attempt to uproot idolatrous practice. Indeed, it was the sin of his generation that caused

UMI

Josiah's death. Josiah, relying on God's promise contained in Leviticus, 26:6 "neither shall the sword go through your land" gathered his army to meet Phalsoh Necho who was marching to battle against the Assyrians at Megiddo. Jeremiah had warned the king against intercepting the Egyptians. Josiah, however, unaware of the people's idolatry, did not realize that God's promise would not be fulfilled since the people had not met the necessary precondition of loyalty to God (Lev. 26:3).[59] The righteous king accepted God's decree, and at the moment of his death justified God's action.[60] Jeremiah buried the king and perpetuated his name in the Book of Lamentations.[61]

These sources emphasize the importance to the Rabbis of the ideal of a reunited kingdom ruled by a just king. They may well reflect a contrast that the Rabbis sought to draw between what a good ruler could accomplish (although Josiah failed in the end) and the tragedies that befell Judah under Josiah's less righteous successors.[62] Of more significance in these legends about Josiah and Jeremiah is the light which they shed on Rabbinic thinking on the conditions necessary for national redemption. It is significant that it is Jeremiah and not the king who is depicted as having attempted to reunite the kingdom. A king alone, even a righteous one like Josiah, cannot effect redemption without the guiding hand of God represented by the prophet. The prophet, God's messenger to the people, through his attempted restoration of the ten tribes, gave to the people concrete evidence of God's redemptive powers. However, a righteous king and evidence of God's redemptive power were not enough. The generation itself must be worthy of redemption. It must be one that heeds the words of the prophet and follows the example of the righteous king. Josiah was the victim of an unworthy generation. The seeds of redemption represented by the righteous king and the attempt to reunite the kingdom never came to fruition. Instead, tragedy was to befall Judah. Jeremiah experienced the ectasy of initiating the redemption of his people only later to go through the agony of witnessing their destruction.

The tragedy for him is both national and personal. However, the essential lesson that the Rabbis derived from Jeremiah's relationship with Josiah was one of comfort. That relationship held out the possibility of redemption if the people would prove themselves worthy. Through the dark years to come, the people still had the vision of what could yet come to pass.

JEREMIAH AND HANANIAH

Biblical and Rabbinic sources picture Jeremiah as a man in isolation. Rejected by his society and viewed with suspicion by the kings and most of the governmental officials, Jeremiah also suffered the enmity of his fellow prophets. It is from the confrontation between Jeremiah and the other prophets of his day that we derive an important element in the Rabbinic understanding of true prophecy.

While Rabbinic literature stresses the consolatory function of the prophets, the Rabbis did not view them merely as bearers of good tidings. As much as they emphasized the comforting themes of Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Jeremiah, the Rabbis also understood that it was an essential prophetic function to warn the people of the consequences of their actions. As we have seen, Jeremiah suffered greatly because he fulfilled this function. His confrontation with the false prophets of his day centered on this aspect of prophetic activity.

Several Rabbinic sources elaborate on the dramatic confrontation between Jeremiah and Hananiah ben Azzur (Jer. 28). The Babylonian Talmud cites Hananiah as an example of a false prophet. In its discussion of false prophecy, the Mishnah describes two kinds of false prophet. The first is a prophet who prophesies that which he has not heard; his prophecy is a personal invention. The second is one who prophesies that which was not told to him, but to another prophet.[63] The Rabbis view Hananiah as an example of the latter:

> Now Jeremiah stood in the upper market place, and said, "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Behold, I will break the bow of Elam (Jer. 49:35)". Thereupon, Hananiah the son of Azzur drew an a minori conclusion. If Elam which only came to assist Babylon, yet the Holy One, blessed be He, said Behold, I will break the bow of Elam; then how much more so the Chaldeans themselves! So he went to the lower market place and proclaimed, "Thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel saying, I have broken the yoke of the kingdom of Babylon (Jer. 28:2)".[64]

Hananiah did not completely invent his prophecy. He based it on what he felt to be a logical extension of the words of Jeremiah. Hananiah's fault, it would appear, was that he did not correctly understand the prophetic role. He would transform the prophet into a comforter exclusively. Failing to recognize that the prophet must reproach and goad, Hananiah's soothing words could not lead the people to avert the disaster that their sins were bringing. He was at one with his society and viewed it solely from the perspective of an "insider". He knew none of Jeremiah's inner turmoil. A true prophet is not only part of his society, but he is also able to apply to his society the criterion of God's judgment.[65] Those who proclaim "peace, peace where there is no peace" wrongly blind the people to the need for repentance and thereby bring disaster.[66]

However, the message of "peace, peace" is, of course, more acceptable to society. In his confrontation with Hananiah, Jeremiah is challenged to prove his words.[67] Jeremiah's response is that he can bring no proof to support his prophecy of doom; if the prophecy does not come true, it is because God has changed His mind. Paradoxically, the prophet of woe succeeds when his words are proved false because the people, taking his words to heart, have repented and averted the predicted calamity. The prophet of weal, however, must bring proof of his words for the only other way of substantiating his message is through the unfolding of events (28:9), and here the risk is very great. Jeremiah returned Hananiah's challenge. Jeremiah's challenge to Hananiah was: bring proof of your words or be prepared to shoulder the responsibility for the coming destruction.[68]

Indeed Jeremiah realized that it was useless to resist the Babylonian advance for another reason. Nebuchadnezzar, although a wicked king, was the beneficiary of divine favor for the honor which he had once shown to God. Talmudic legend states that when Merodach-baladan sent a letter to Hezekiah congratulating him on his recovery from illness (Isa. 39:1), Nebuchadnezzar, at that time the king's scribe, wanted to change the text of the letter. When informed that the wording of the letter was: "Peace to King Hezekiah, peace to the city of Jerusalem, and peace to the great God," Nebuchadnezzar objected that God should have been mentioned first.[69] He ran after the messenger, but after he had taken four steps the angel Gabriel stopped him.[70] Because of this merit, it was useless for Israel to resist Nebuchadnezzar, and those prophets who encouraged the people's resistance were courting disaster. It is for this reason, according to the Rabbis, that Jeremiah cried out: "My heart within me is broken because of the prophets...(Jer. 23:9)."[71]

Yet, Jeremiah, who constantly rebelled against his task of prophesying destruction, expressed a certain sympathy for the words of Hananiah. After listening to Hananiah's prophecy that God would break the Babylonian yoke and return the exiles along with the Temple vessels from Babylonian captivity within two years time, Jeremiah said, "Amen, may the Lord do so (28:6)". Pesikta Rabbati embellishes Jeremiah's response: "When Jeremiah heard him, he replied, 'so be it'. May your words come true and mine be annulled. For I stand to win and you to lose. I, a priest, will continue to eat in the Temple, and you, a Gibeonite, will continue to be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for the altar". [72]

According to this account, Jeremiah seems to mock rather than endorse the words of Hananiah. However, several other Rabbinic sources interpret Jeremiah's "amen" as a genuine expression of the prophet's real feelings of sympathy for Hananiah's words. The late third century Palestinian Amora, R. Jose bar R. Hanina, cited Jeremiah's "amen" as the Biblical proof for his ruling that "amen" is the proper term to be used by one who wishes to express agreement with what he has just heard.[73]

The late second century Tanna, R. Dostai ben Judah, commenting on Deut. 32:20 explained the defective spelling of emun as an indication that the word should be read amen. R. Dostai's interpretation is that Israel was guilty of the sin of ingratitude, for they did not add the confirming word "amen" to pronouncements of God's blessings to Israel. Citing Jer. 11:5 as his proof text, R. Dostai declared that Jeremiah was the first to do this.[74] Thus, according to R. Dostai, "amen" is the appropriate response to good tidings and words of blessing.

Still another source faults Jeremiah for saying "amen" to the words of Hananiah. R. Elazar explains Jeremiah's imprisonment at the hands of Irijah on the trumped up charge of committing treason for the Babylonians as a just punishment for the prophet's words of support for Hananiah.[75]

Hananiah was guilty of false prophecy. He prophesied only good. Jeremiah, whose love for his people was deep, and who suffered greatly for prophesying doom felt a certain sympathy for the false prophet. Torn between the claims of God and love for the people, Jeremiah found the conflicting pressures unbearable. When Hananiah remained unconvinced by Jeremiah's words and repeated his prophecy of restoration within two years' time (28:11), Jeremiah dropped the argument, and went home. It was God who called him back to his task, and commanded him to prophesy the certainty of Babylonian rule and Hananiah's death (28:12). The people had to be forewarned; it was the only way to avert calamity. This was the task of the true prophet.

JEREMIAH AND THE DESTRUCTION

Rabbinic descriptions of Jeremiah's actions during the time of the Destruction vividly depict the agony of the prophet caught between his burden of chastising the people on the one hand and his deep love for them on the other. The basic theme of these legends is consolation, but the element of Jeremiah's harshness is also present in some of them.

One source of Jeremiah's turmoil at this time was his absence from Jerusalem when the city fell. A tradition in Pesikta Rabbati relates that God wanted to remove the protection which Jeremiah's righteousness afforded to the city of Jerusalem, and so commanded the prophet to go to Anathoth and purchase his uncle's field. Jeremiah interpreted this command as a favorable sign. The trip to conduct family business during a time of national emergency, undertaken at God's command, was a sign that the people would be allowed to carry on their normal business pursuits. Jerusalem would not fall.[76] Upon his return from Anathoth, Jeremiah saw the smoke rising from the Temple and mistook it for the smoke of sacrifices that a repentant Israel was offering. However, when he realized what had really happened, he turned in anger against God for sending him out of the city. "You have enticed me, and I was enticed; You have overcome me and have prevailed (20:7)." This legend continues with the following moving account:

> As he continued on his way, he kept crying out, saying: "What road have the sinners taken? What road have those taken who are going off to exile?...I will go and perish with them". So he went, he saw the road covered with blood, and the ground on both sides soaked with the slain. He put his face close to the ground and saw the footprints of sucklings and infants who were walking into captivity. He threw himself upon the ground and kissed the footprints. When he caught up with the host going into captivity, he embraced them and kissed them.[77]

Nevertheless, despite Jeremiah's feeling of compassion for his people, the chastising element of his prophecy was present even at this poignant moment. His words to the people when he met them were not words of comfort. Rather he told them that the catastrophe had occurred because they had not hearkened to his words of warning.[78] Later on, when he was about to depart from them and return to Judah, he told the weeping people that had they wept even once while they were in Zion, they would not have been driven out.[79]

Other Rabbinic traditions concerning the Destruction portray Jeremiah as lacking sufficient sympathy for the people. A legend in Lamentations Rabba describes how God in the company of the ministering angels visited the Temple site shortly after the Destruction. Mournfully, God wept over the calamity and compared His loss to that of a father who had prepared the marriage festivities for his only son only to see that son die under the wedding canopy. Jeremiah, however, did not join God in weeping, and was reprimanded by God for this insensitivity: "Don't you feel any anguish for Me and My children?" Desiring solace which was not forthcoming from Jeremiah, God commanded the prophet to summon the Patriarchs and Moses from their sepulchres, "for they know how to weep".[80] Jeremiah, the denouncer of his people, the prophet of the Destruction, cannot even now allow his sympathy for the people to take full control of him. This even though God Himself is in a state of mourning for Israel.

When Jeremiah had summoned the Patriarchs and Moses, they, accompanied by God, went weeping from one gate (of the Temple) to another like a man whose dead is lying before him, and the Holy One, blessed be He, lamented saying, "Woe to the King who succeeded in His youth but failed in His old age!" (Note the daring criticism of God!) The Midrash continues with a vivid description of the laments and pleas on behalf of Israel of Abraham, the ministering angels, the Torah, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. All of this pleading was of no avail; God responded with no word of comfort that

Israel's suffering would end. It was only Mother Rachel's plea that aroused God's mercy, and for her sake He promised that Israel would be restored.[81] Nowhere in this entire scene does Jeremiah appear. He neither mourns for nor pleads for Israel. While this legend is consolatory--God Himself mourns for Israel and promises her restoration--Jeremiah is not the vehicle through which that comfort is transmitted.

There is an additional element of reproach for Jeremiah contained in this legend. When the prophet came to the Patriarchs and Moses, he did not explain to them the reason for God's summons because he did not want them to blame him for the catastrophe that had occurred.[82] Moses heard the evil news only when he inquired of the ministering angels. Jeremiah's defensiveness leaves the implication that he is to blame, at least in part, for the disaster.

On the other hand, it is in the legends that deal with Jeremiah's reaction to the Destruction of the Temple and the exile of the people that we see the most profound expression of the prophet's love for Israel. The third century Palestinian Amora, R. Aha, told of Jeremiah's desire to share in the suffering of his countrymen. Although Nebuchadnezzar had instructed his general Nebuzaradan to look after Jeremiah, cause him no harm, and comply with his wishes, the prophet exasperated his captors by joining a group of old men and youths who were being led into exile in chains. Nebuzaradan removed the prophet from this group and chastised him for his odd behavior in the following words of frustration:

> I see one of three possibilities in you: either you are a false prophet, or you are impervious to pain, or you are a shedder of blood. Either you are a false prophet, because all these years you prophesied against this city that it would be destroyed, yet since it has been destroyed, you are deeply distressed. Or you have a contempt for pain, because I have no desire to do you harm, but you wish to do yourself harm, as though to say, "I take no notice of pain". Or you are a shedder of blood, because the king gave me strict orders concerning you not to harm you, but you wish harm to be done to yourself so that the king may hear of it and put me to death.[83]

The irritated general, unable to follow the king's instructions concerning Jeremiah's comfort, does not understand the prophet's feelings. Jeremiah is neither a false prophet nor is he impervious to pain. He doesn't even wish to get Nebuzaradan into trouble with the king. The Babylonian officials are irrelevant to Jeremiah. His sole concern is Israel. He takes no satisfaction in seeing his dire words come true. If anything, he sees himself as a failure. The people did not heed his warnings, and now they are reaping the bitter fruit sown by their actions. The prophet, whose love for his people has been a source of much agony to him, gives vent to this love as he unites himself with them and joins in their

UMI

sufferings.

Despite his wish to be with his people, Jeremiah did not accompany them into exile. This, too, was out of love for the people. When God gave Jeremiah the choice of accompanying the exiles to Babylonia while He remained with those in Judah, or staying with the people who remained in Judah while God went with those going to Babylonia, the prophet chose to stay in Judah. Jeremiah realized that the exiles would need the kind of guidance and comfort that only God could give.[84] The legend relates that on his way back to Jerusalem, the broken-hearted prophet once again came upon the strewn limbs of the people who had been killed. He picked them up, kissed them and grieved over their failure to heed his warnings.[85]

The greatest manifestation of the prophet's love for his people is not his grieving over their calamity or seeking to join them in their suffering. It is rather, in his words of comfort to the broken generation of a defeated people. The long description of the events surrounding the Destruction contained in Pesikta Rabbati concludes on a striking note of hope and comfort. On the way back to Jerusalem, Jeremiah met a woman cloaked in black who was seeking comfort from someone. She compared herself to a woman whose husband had died on an overseas voyage. Even before she could begin mourning for him, she received news that her seven sons had been killed. When Jeremiah likened her sufferings to those of Israel, the woman revealed her identity as Mother Zion. The prophet thereupon explained that her chastisement was like that of Job. She, like Job, had lost her children and her wealth, and had been cast upon a dungheap. However, just as God had restored Job's family and wealth to him, so too would He restore Mother Zion's children and wealth to her. Even more, while Israel had undergone destruction through human hands, God, Himself, would bring about the future restoration in accordance with the verse, "The Lord builds up Jerusalem, He gathers together the dispersed of Israel (Ps. 147:2)."[86]

While this legend records Jeremiah's message of comfort, others tell of the prophet's bold intercession with God to insure the people's restoration. In these legends the Rabbis were merely expatiating upon an aspect of Jeremiah's activity that is already prominent in the Biblical account. (Cf. Jer. 7:6; 14:11; 15:11; 18:20).[87]

Even before the Destruction, Jeremiah had elicited from God a promise of restoration. A statement in Midrash Psalms portrays the prophet protesting to God for telling him to purchase a field in Anathoth while the Babylonians were besieging Jerusalem. What need was there for purchasing land when the state was about to fall and the people carried into exile? God's answer (32:36f) was a ringing promise that after the Destruction the people would be restored to their land.[88]

Pesikta Rabbati, a late Midrash, records that Jeremiah, seeing the affliction that God had visited upon Israel, asked God if He could ever return to Israel. The Midrash suggested a parable to illustrate what Jeremiah meant by his question. A king was married to a queen of noble blood whom he loved very much. As the queen knew that the king loved her, she ignored his decrees thinking she would go unpunished. Once, the king became angry at her and ordered his servants to drag her out by the hair. A representative of the queen's family who witnessed this asked the king if he would return to the queen. If he intended to take her back, he could do with her as he pleased, since a man is master of his wife. However, if the king did not intend to return to his queen, he should divorce her, so that she could marry another. Jeremiah was challenging God either to end the people's sufferings or to break His special relationship with them. That relationship was founded on love, and excessive punishment of Israel exceeded the proper bounds of chastisement for Israel's breach of faith. Though Israel had sinned, God should still love her; if not, He should let her go her own way. The prophet's bold words drew a comforting response from God. God reminded the prophet of what He had told Moses at the conclusion of his rebukes of Israel: "And yet for all their contrariness, I will not reject them (Lev. 26:44)". The prophet's challenge had been met. God would not forsake Israel.[89]

Another source describes Jeremiah's irreverent reproach of God. Midrash Psalms contains a statement by R. Phinehas bar Hama which has Jeremiah implicitly rebuke God by changing the established order of prayer. Moses had fixed the order of prayer through the formula which he used in Deut. 10:17, "the great God, the mighty, the awesome". Jeremiah, however, departed from this formula and in his prayer referred to God as "great and mighty" but not "awesome" (Jer. 32:18). R. Phinehas explained:

> Why did Jeremiah say "God the Mighty?" Because, he explained, this One, though He saw His children put in chains and His Temple destroyed, remained silent; hence it is proper to call Him "mighty." But he did not say "God the awesome" because the Temple--of which it is said 'Awesome is God out of thy holy place (Ps. 68:36)'--was destroyed. Where, then, is the awe, if enemies come into His house and were not awed?

According to R. Phinehas, Jeremiah was telling God that He Himself had been diminished in some measure by allowing Israel's enemies to destroy the Temple.[90]

In line with these legends is the statement in Deuteronomy Rabba which compared Jeremiah favorably to Moses and David in their defense of Israel. The Rabbis likened Israel to the evil-doing son of a king. The son had three teachers. One advised to make chains weighing one hundred pounds for the son. This was Moses. The second teacher, David, said to bring chains weighing twelve pounds. Jeremiah, the third teacher, pleaded with God that these chains would be too heavy to bear. Instead, he asked for chains weighing one pound only.[91]

Thus, while Jeremiah's harshness is present in some of the legends surrounding the Destruction, the prophet comes across most clearly as comforter, defender, and pleader on behalf of his people.

JEREMIAH AND THE TEMPLE VESSELS

Although overwhelmed by the tragedy that had befallen his people, Jeremiah was able, in the midst of destruction, to lay plans for the day when Israel would return to its land. The Apocryphal II Maccabees relates that Jeremiah ordered the exiles to take with them the fire of the altar.[92] The prophet himself in response to God's command, took the tent, the ark, and the incense altar and hid them in Mt. Nebo, the mountain from which Moses had viewed the Holy Land just before his death.[93] All of these implements of the Temple worship were to be stored up in secret until "God gathers the congregation of his people together and shows his mercy (2:8)". The hiding of the Temple vessels and the fire was thus meant to show the people that a day would come when the Temple would be rebuilt. Destruction and exile was not to be the final chapter in the history of Israel.

That Jeremiah was the one to embody this comforting message of the Temple's future rebuilding may seem odd in the light of his pronouncements against faith in the Temple and its ritual (7:14). R.H. Charles remarks that "Legend had no scruple in transforming a prophet who was radically indifferent, if not hostile, to the ritual of the Temple into a pious conservative."[94] However, legend here is not merely exercising a whim. Its purpose is deliberate. The message of comfort is that much stronger when delivered by one who had so vehemently inveighed against blind faith in the Temple.

UMI

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Cf. above, p. 151, n. 18.

2. Cf. above, p. 151, n. 20.

3. PK, 13:14.

ר' לעזר אמר כל הנביאים פתחו בדברי תוכחות וחתמו בדברי
נחמות חוץ של ירמיהו שחתם בדברי תוכחות ואמר ככה תשקע
בבל ולא תקום.

Cf. also TY Berakot, 5, 1, 8d.

4. Ibid.

אמר ר' יוחנן עוד בדברי נחמות חתם גם הוא לפי שהיה
חוזר ומתנבא על חורבן בית המקדש יכול בחורבן בית
המקדש חתם ת"ל עד הנה דברי ירמיה במפולת מחריביו
חתם.

5. Ibid., 13:12.

...ירמיה שבימיו נעשה בית המקדש אירימון.

Cf. also Ecclesistes R., 1:2

6. Ibid.

ד"א ירמיה שבימיו נתרוממה מידת הדין.

The word play here is ram yah. Yah is one of the names of God, and is used here, like Elohim, to denote God's attribute of justice. Cf. A. Marmorsetin, The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God (New York: 1968), pp. 44-53.

7. Ibid., 13:11.

ד"א ירמיה רם יה עשר מסעות נסעה השכינה...

UMI

Cf. also ARN(A), 34, p. 102 and TB Rosh Hashanah, 31a.

8. Cf. above, p. 225, n. 62.

9. PK, 13:12.

בן חלקיה א"ר יודה בר סימון מאותו השבט שכתוב בו אני חלקך ונחלתך.

The name Hilkiah is explained as meaning helek yah, ("portion of the Lord"), i.e. from the tribe which was God's portion, the Levites. Cf. Pesikta De Rab Kahanna, p. 262, n. 35.

10. Ibid., 13:4.

א"ר אבא בר כהנא כתיב ולא היית כזונה לקלס אתנן ייתי ברא דמקלקלתה דתקנת עובדיה ויוכח לברא דמתקנתה דקלקלת עובדיה את מוצא כל מה שכתוב בישראל לגניי כתוב ברחב לשבח.

"R. Abba bar Kahana applied to Israel the verse, 'You are not as the harlot who made her deeds comely (Ezek. 16:31)', and then said: Let the descendant [Jeremiah] of a shameless woman [Rahab] who made her deeds comely, come and reprimand the son of a comely woman who made his deeds shameless [Israel]. You find that all those words of Scripture which are used in tribute to Rahab contain a reproach to Israel...".

11. Ibid., 13:5.

הרי ירמיה בא מבני בניה של רחב הזונה ועושה לכם דברים של סיכים בעיניכם ולצנינים בצידכם.

The comment is based on Num. 33:55: "But if you will not drive out the inhabitants of the Land before you, then those that remain of them shall be as thorns in your eyes and as pricks in your sides".

12. Ibid., 13:14.

מה בנימין לא נתברך אבינו יעקב שהוא מעמיד שנים עשר
שבטים עד שנולד בנימין כך מכל הנביאים שנתנבאו על
ירושלים לא נתבררה נבואתן עד שעמד ירמיה.

13. Ecclesistes R., 1:2.

ג׳ נביאים על ידי שהיה נבואתן דברי קנתרין נתלה נבואתן
בעצמן ואלו הן דברי קהלת דברי עמוס דברי ירמיהו.

14. Based on the translation of Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta De Rab Kahanna, p. 256.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., p. 257. Cf. also Lamentations R., proem 1.

17. Ibid., 13:7.

כל מקום שאמר הכתוב דבר דברי דברים אלות ותוכחות הן
...כתוב דברי ירמיהו בן חלקיהו מה כתוב תמן ואשר למות
למות ואשר לשבי לשבי.

18. Ibid., 13:8.

דבר אחר מותוי דירמיה אשר למות למות.

19. Ibid.

דבר אחר אמר הקב"ה לירמיה לך אמור לישראל עשו תשובה
ואם לאו הא אנא מחריב ית בית מקדשי אמרין ואין מחריב
לאו דידיה הוא מחריב אלא כך אמר הקב"ה הא אנא מחריב
מקדשיי ודברי יקום בירמיה.

UMI

20. Ibid.

אמר הקב"ה לירמיה דבריי אנא בעי גבהון ירמיה אני אמרתי
להם אנכי ה׳ אלהיך והם לא עשו כן אלא אמרים לעץ אבי אתה.

"The Holy One said to Jeremiah: I have been demanding from Israel a heeding of My words, Jeremiah. My word to them was, 'I am the Lord your God (Ex. 20:2)', which they did not heed, 'saying to a stock you are my father (Jer. 2:27)'".

21. Cf. above, pp. 120ff.

22. PR, 26, p. 129a.

יציאתו של ירמיה לעולם זעיק זעקה גדולה כבחור ואמר מעי
מעי [אוחילה] חושש אני [קירות] לבי איברי זעו עלי שבר
על שבר אני ששברתי כל הארץ...אמר לו הקב"ה בטרם אצרך
בבטן עד שלא יצרתיך במעי אמך מניחך להיות מתנבא על
עמי ענה ירמיה ואמר לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של
עולם איני יכול להתנבאות עליהם איזה נביא יצא להם
ולא בקשו להורגו עמדו להם משה ואהרון לא בקשו לרגום
אותם באבנים...איני יכול לצאת על ידי ישראל הנה לא
ידעתי דבר כי נער אנכי אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא הלא
לנער אני אוהב...אל תאמר כי נער אנכי כי על כל אשר
אשלחך [תלך וגו׳] טול הכוס הזה של חימה והשקה את
הגוים נטל ירמיה את הכוס [ואמר] למי אשקה תחילה
אמר לו את ירושלים ואת ערי יהודה השקה תחילה...
שהם ראש לכל המלכיות כיון ששמע ירמיה כך התחיל
פותח פיו וארר את יומו.

"At Jeremiah's coming forth into the world, he cried a great cry as though he were already a full grown youth, and exclaimed: 'My insides, my insides, I writhe in pain. The chambers of my heart are in agony (Jer. 4:19)'. My limbs are trembling. Destruction upon destruction! I am the one who will announce destruction to the whole world...The Holy One, blessed be He said: 'Before I formed you in the belly (Jer. 1:5)', before I formed you in the belly of your mother, I designated you to prophesy to my people. Jeremiah answered and said before the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, I cannot prophesy to them. What prophets ever went forth to them whom they did not wish to slay? When Moses and Aaron rose to act in their behalf, did they not wish to stone them (Num. 14:10)?...Besides, I cannot go to Israel because, 'Behold, I cannot speak, I am a child (Jer. 1:6)'. The Holy One, blessed be He replied: Is it not because you are a child that I love you...But I tell you not to say, 'I am a child. For you will go to whomever I shall send you (Jer. 1:7)'. Take this cup of wrath and make the nations drink. Jeremiah took the cup and asked: Whom shall I make drink first?...God replied: Make Jerusalem and the cities of Judah drink first because they are the chief of all earthly kingdoms. When Jeremiah heard this, he opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth (Jer. 20:14)".

It is notable that when God reassured Jeremiah, He

UMI

told him that his being chosen as a child was a sign of divine love. He pointed out that the term child was used affectionately by Him to refer to Israel (Hos. 11:1 and Jer. 2:2). However, God did not respond to Jeremiah's complaint about the mistreatment suffered by previous prophets. God would only assure the prophet of His love; He would not allay his fears about the difficulties of his task.

23. Exodus R., 4:3.

מה שהוא גוזר על האדם אין להשיב על דבריו כמה בקש
בלעם לקלל את ישראל ועל כרחו שלא כטובתו היה מתברך
...כמה בקש יונה שלא לילך בשליחותו של הקב"ה...והלך
בעל כרחו...כמה בקש ירמיה שלא להתנבאות ונתנבא שלא
כטובתו...כמה סרב משה שלא לילך בשליחותו של הקב"ה
...ולבסוף הלך בעל כרחו...

24. PR, 27-28, p. 133a-b.

אמר ירמיה רבון העולמים מה עונות [היו] בידי שהנביאים
[שעמדו] לפני ועתידים לעמוד אחרי לא החרבת ביתך על
ידי אחד מהם אלא על ידי מה היה ירמיהו עושה היה חוזר
בשערי ירושלים היה אומר כה אמר לי הקב"ה...והן לא
תנבא בשם ה׳ והוא אומר להם אף אני איני מבקש להזכירנו
ומה אני יכול לעשות והוא בלבי [כאש בוערת] כאשה
יושבת על המשבר ואמרתי לא אזכרנו ולא אדבר עוד בשמו
והיה בלבי כאש בוערת עצור בעצמותי.

25. Mekilta Bo on Ex. 12:1, p. 4.

נמצאת אתה אומר שלשה בנים הם אחד תבע כבוד האב וכבוד

הבן ואחר תבע כבוד האב ולא כבוד הבן ואחר תבע כבוד הבן
ולא כבוד האב ירמיה תבע כבוד האב וכבוד הבן שנאמר נחנו
פשענו ומרינו אתה לא סלחת לכך נכפלה נבואתו...

Cf. also ARN(B), 47, p. 129. The Rabbis considered Jeremiah the author of Lamentations. Cf. TB Baba Bathra, 15a.

Elijah is the prophet who was concerned only with the honor due God (cf. above, p.87), and Jonah with that due man.

26. PR, 26, p. 129a.

פתח פיו והוכיח לאמו אמר לה אמי אמי לא עברתני כדרך
הנשים ולא ילדתני כדרך היולדות שמא היו דרכיך כדרכי
כל הסוטות...למה אינך שותה מן המים המרים העזת פניך
...כיון ששמעה אמו דברים הללו אמרה מה ראה זה לומר כי
כך שלא בעונותו פתח פיו אמר לה לא עליך אמי אני אומר
כך לא עליך אמי אני מתנבא [אלא] לציון ולירושלים אני
אומר.

27. Robert Gordis, The Song of Songs and Lamentations (New York: 1974), p. 173. Cf. also his "The Marriage of Hosea", Hebrew Union College Annual, XXV, (1954), pp. 9-36.

28. Ibid., p. 173.

29. Ibid., p. 174. The prophet's compassion sometimes causes him to identify even with animals that suffer during Israel's calamities. Sheldon Blank describes the dirge in chapter 14 spoken in a time of drought in the following words: "There is more here than the eye of an alert witness, a reporter carefully

recording observed details. There is a sympathy that penetrates beneath the surface of things seen. The prophet has himself become the lords of Jerusalem, the abashed farmer, the doe and wild ass. His sensibility is such that he partakes of what he describes. Sensitive and tender he takes the grief to himself and it is his own". Sheldon Blank, Jeremiah: Man and Prophet (Cincinnati: 1961), p. 89.

30. PK, 13:6.

ר׳ יודה בר סימון פתח נביא אקים להם מקרב אחיהם כמוך
וכתוב ולא קם נביא עוד בישראל כמשה ואת אומר כמוך
אלא כמוך בתוכחות את מוצא כל מה שכתוב בזה כתוב בזה
זה נתנבא ארבעים שנה וזה נתנבא ארבעים שנה זה נתנבא
על יהודה וישראל וזה נתנבא על יהודה וישראל זה עמדו
בני שבטו כנגדו וזה עמדו בני שבטו כנגדו זה הושלך
ליאור וזה הושלך לבור זה הוצל על ידי אמה וזה הוצל
על ידי עבד זה בא בדברי תוכחות וזה בא בדברי תוכחות.

31. L. Ginzberg, Legends, VI, p. 385, n. 13. The New Testament also equates Moses and Jeremiah. Cf. Matthew, 16:14 and Revelations 11:3.

32. Ex. 32:31ff.

33. Genesis R., 56:5.

ר׳ חנינא בר יצחק אמר כל מה שהיה אבינו אברהם עוקר את
יצחק בנו מלמטן היה הקב"ה כופת שריהם של עובדי כוכבים
מלמעלן ולא עשה אלא כיון שהפליגו ישראל עצמן בימי ירמיה
אמר להם הקב"ה מה אתם סבורים דאלין כפתיא קימין.

34. PK, 13:8. Cf. above p. 272, n. 20

35. Numbers R., 9:4.

ומנין לשבט יהודה ובנימין שלא נחתם גזר דינם אלא על
הנאוף שכן ירמיה צווח לפני האלהים בימי מנשה עשו ישראל
רעות יותר מהם לא החרבת אותם אלא בימי...אמר לו הקב"ה
בימי מנשה אף על פי שהכעיסו אותי היו בנים בני אבותם
עכשו בני זמה הם.

The Midrash goes on to state that God was willing to forgive all the other sins of Israel, including idolatry; the sin of adultery, however, was too much.

36. PR, 27-28, p. 133b.

כך היתה [מדת] של בנות ירושלים חוזרות ורואות בחורים
יושבים בחוץ ומטפחות ומקשות ברגליהם שכן כתב ותלכנה
נטויות גרון [וגו' הלוך וטפוף תלכנה וברגליהם תעכסנה]
והם מצהלות אחריהם כסוסים מיוזנים שנאמר סוסים
מיוזנים משכים היו וגו'.

37. PK, 4:10. Cf. Braude's comment, Pesikta De Rab Kahanna, p. 84, n. 113.

38. Exodus R., 16:2.

וכן אתה מוצא שירמיהו אומר לדורו הריני נכנס עם
עבודת כוכבים לדון ואומר מעשיה ומעשי אלהים ויודע
מה בין הקב"ה לעבודת כוכבים...

Cf. also, Lamentations R., proem 1.

39. PR, 27-28, p. 133a. Cf. above, p. 274, n. 24.

UMI

40. Cf. above, p. 225, n. 62. R.V. Bergren has noted that the people did not deny the accusations which Jeremiah levelled against them. Instead, they vented their wrath on their accusor hoping thereby to render his words ineffective. He sees the same motive in Jehoiakim's burning of the scroll (ch. 36). "The method is consistent: if the announced disaster is written, one gets rid of the scroll; if it is spoken, one gets rid of the speaker". Richard V. Bergren, The Prophets and the Law (Cincinatti: 1974), p. 60.

41. Lamentations R., 2:2.

> בשעה שירמיהו מתנבא על ישראל ואומר להם עשו תשובה
> קודם שיבואו השונאים עליכם והיו אומרים לו אם יבואו
> השונאים מה הן יכולין לעשות לנו דין אמר אית בי מקפלה
> שור דנור וחורנא אמר אית בי מקפלה שור דמיא וחרינא
> אמר אית בי מקפלה שור דברזל...

"When Jeremiah prophesied to Israel and said to them: Repent before the enemy comes upon you. They replied: If the enemy comes, what can they do to us? One said: I will surround the city with a wall of five [by invoking the angel who has dominion over fire]. Another said: I will surround the city with a wall of water. Another said: I will surround the city with a wall of iron". Note the parallel between this Midrash and the story of the three wealthy men of Jerusalem who undertook to supply the city with its basic necessities during the first revolt against the Romans. Cf. TB Gittin, 56a.

42. Deuteronomy R., 2:16.

למה הדבר דומה לבן מלך שיצא לתרבות רעה והיה המלך משלח
פרגוגו אחריו ואמר לו חזור בך בני והיה הבן משלחו ואומר
לאביו באלו הפנים אני חוזר בי ואני מתבייש לפניך והיה
אביו משלחו ואומר לו בני יש בן מתבייש לחזור אצל אביו
ואם אתה חוזר לא אצל אביך אתה חוזר.

43. Ibid.

אמר ר' עזריה א"ל הקב"ה לירמיהו לך אמור להם לישראל
חייכם אני כופר בכם אתם אמרתם לי בסיני ומעי המו
עליו (Cant. 5:4) אף אני כך אומר לכם...

44. PR, 33, p. 153b.

אמר ר' יעקב דכפר חנין תשעים שנה עשה הקדוש ברוך הוא
משלח ומעיד בישראל...כמה נביאים היה הקדוש ברוך הוא
משלח אצל ישראל בכל יום שיעידו בהם שנאמר ואשלח
עליהם [את] כל עבדי הנביאים מיעוט נביאים שנים אחד
בבוקר ואחד במנחה וחבירו אומר נביא אחד היה הקדוש
ברוך הוא מחדש להם בכל יום שילך ויעיד בהם והיה אף
ירמיה בא עמו שני פעמים בכל יום בין בבקר בין בערב
והיה מעיד בישראל עמהם...

The figure of ninety years is based on II Kings 17:13, "And God forewarned Israel and Judah by the hand of every prophet and every seer...". The Hebrew for "forewarned" is ויעד and the numerical value of the letters of this word equals ninety.

45. Ibid., 26, p. 129b.

ירמיה היה אחד משלשה נביאים שנתנבא באותו הדור ירמיהו
[היה מתנבא בשווקים] צפניה בתוך בתי כנסיות וחולדה
אצל הנשים.

The reference to Zephaniah may be based on Zeph. 2:1, "Gather yourselves together, gather together". The synagogue, beth ha-knesset, is the place of "gathering". Jeremiah's prophesying in the city streets may be based on Jer. 5:1, "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem...and seek in her streets if there be any that do justly and seek truth; then I will pardon her". Huldah preached among the women presumably, because in Talmudic times, a woman was considered unfit to preach (or teach) men. Cf. Mishnah Kiddushin, 4:13.

46. PK, 13:13.

אמר ר ברכיה אמר ירמיה עשוק שמי ככהנים בימי משה יברכך
ה ובימי ולקח מהם קללה...בימי משה וישם לך שלום ובימי
כי אספתי את שלומי מאת העם הזה נאם ה את החסד ואת הרחמים.

47. TB Baba Kama, 16b.

רבי אלעזר אמר שחשדוהו מזונה ר שמואל בר נחמני אמר
שחשדוהו מאשת איש.

These comments are interpretations of the verse, "For they have dug a pit to capture me, and have hidden snares for my feet (18:22)". It is possible that this may be disguised criticism of Jeremiah's charges against Israel, e.g. Jer. 2:20, "...and under every leafy tree you played the harlot"; 3:3, "You had a harlot's forehead, you refused to be ashamed"; 9:1, "For they are all adulterers". Jeremiah suffered in accordance with the Rabbinic principle of retribution, "measure for measure".

48. Ibid.

אמר ירמיה לפני הקב"ה רבונו של עולם אפילו בשעה שעושין
צדקה הכשילם בבני אדם שאינן מהוגנים כדי שלא יקבלו
עליהן שכר.

This comment is based on the verse, "Let them be made to stumble before You; deal with them in the time of Your anger (18:23)". This was too harsh a curse for some of the medieval commentators to accept as being levelled against the people as a whole. Instead, they interpreted it as Jeremiah's curse against the people of Anathoth only. Cf. Tosafot, ad. loc.

49. See above, pp. 250-251.

50. TB Moed Katan, 26a. The Talmud explains that the scroll was the book of Lamentations. The king was not concerned when he heard the prophecies of doom for Jerusalem and exile for the people. Only when he heard the words, "her enemies have become the head"--a prophecy that he would lose his kingship--did Jehoiakim tear the scroll and throw it into the flames.

51. PR, 26, p. 130a.

ראה אותו יוצא בשער בנימין הלך ואחז אותו ואמר לו אל
הכשדים אתה יוצא...רגזו עליו השרים והכוהו ונתנוהו
בבית האסורים בבית יונתן הספר...אותה השעה שלח צדקיהו
והביאו אצלו ואמר לו יש דבר מאת ה׳ אמר לו ירמיהו דבר
עתיד מלך בבל להגלותך...

The account is based on Jer. 37.

52. Ibid., p. 131b.

...ענה צדקיהו הרגני ראשון שלא אראה בדם בני ובניו
אומרים ומבקשים ממנו הורגנו תחלה שלא נראה דם אבינו
שפוך על הארץ וכן עשה להם שחטם לפניו ואחר כך חטט את
עיניו [ונתנם] בתנור והוליכו בבלה והיה צדקיה צווח
ואמר בואו וראו כל בני אדם שהיה ירמיה מתנבא עלי
ואמר לי לבבל אתה הולך ובבל תמות ובבל עיניך לא
יראו ולא הייתי שומע לדבריו והריני בבבל ועיני לא
רואות [אותה].

53. S. Klein, "Al ha-Sefer Vitae Prophetarum," p. 195. On the other hand, Seder Olam Rabba states that Nebuchadnezzar exiled Jeremiah and Baruch to Babylon. For the various views on where Jeremiah finally settled, cf. L. Ginzberg, Legends, VI, p. 399, n. 42.

54. Robert A. Kraft and Ann-Elizabeth Purintun, Paraleipomena Jeremiou (Missoula: 1972), pp. 45-47. "...and he raised his voice in the midst of them all and said: Glorify God with one voice! All of you glorify God and the son of God who awakens us--

UMI

messiah Jesus--the light of all the ages, the inextinguishable lamp, the life of faith...(9:14)... When Jeremiah was saying this concerning the son of God--that he is coming into the world--the people became very angry and said: This is a repetition of the words spoken by Isaiah son of Amos, when he said: I saw God and the son of God. Come, then, and let us not kill him by the same sort of death with which we killed Isaiah, but let us stone him with stones (9:21-22)".

For the various opinions on the date and original language of this work, see the Annotated Chronological Bibliography, pp. 7-10.

55. L. Ginzberg, Legends, VI, p. 399, n. 42 and Otto Komlos, "About Jewish Elements in the Vitae Prphetarum", Ignace Goldziher Memorial Volume (Jerusalem: 1958), II, p. 130. The legend is mentioned by a number of Christian sources and seems to be alluded to in Hebrews 11:37.

56. Quoted in L. Ginzberg, Legends, VI, pp. 399-400. S. Klein apparently was unaware of this tradition. Cf. S. Klein, "Al ha-Sefer Vitae Prophetarum", p. 195. Cf. also, Yehezkel Kaufmann, Toledot Ha-Emunah Ha-Yisraelit (Jerusalem: 1957), VI, p. 402, n. 6.

57. On Josiah in the Aggada, cf. "Josiah", Encyclopedia Judaica, X, p. 294.

58. TB Megillah, 14b. The Talmud discusses the question why Josiah consulted Huldah instead of Jeremiah concerning the book found in the Temple (II KIngs 22). R. Johanan's explanation is that Jeremiah was not there as he had gone to bring back the ten tribes.

ר' יוחנן אמר ירמיה לא הוה התם שהלך להחזיר עשרת השבטים.

59. Lamentations R., 1:18.

צדיק הוא ה' כי פיהו מריתי מי אמר הפסוק הזה יאשיהו
אמרו...עלה פרעה נכו מלך מצרים להלחם ככרכמיש על
פרת וישלח אליו מלאכים לאמר מה לי ולך מלך יהודה לא
עליך אתה היום ולא הסב יאשיהו פניו ממנו...א"ל
יאשיהו משה רבך אמר וחרב לא תעבור בארצכם...ולא
היה יודע יאשיהו שכל דורו היו עובדים עבודה זרה...
והיה משלח כ' תלמידי חכמים לבער צורה מבתיהם והיו נכנסין
ולא היו מוצאין כלום הן דנפקין הוו אמרין להון סגרון
תרעייתא מבתרכון והוו נפקין להון וסגרין תרעייתא
מבתרכון והיו משתכחא קיימא מן גוו מה כתיב שם ויורו
המורים למלך יאשיהו.

"'The Lord is righteous for I have rebelled against His word' (Lam. 1:18). Who uttered this? Josiah said it, as it is stated, 'After all this when Josiah had prepared the Temple, Necho king of Egypt went up to fight against Carcemish...But he sent ambassadors to him saying: What do I have to do with you, king of Judah? I have not come up against you today... Nevertheless, Josiah would not turn from him (II Chron. 35:20ff)'...Josiah replied to Jeremiah: Has not your teacher's teacher, Moses, declared, 'Neither shall the sword go through your land (Lev. 26:6)'... He was, however, unaware that all the people of his generation were idolators. Josiah had sent two disciples to eradicate idolatry from the people's houses. When they entered the houses they found nothing. As they went out they were told to shut the doors; and when they shut the doors the people inside could see the idol. On that account, 'The archers shot at king Josiah (II Chron. 35:23)'". Cf. also *TB Taanit*, 22b. In this account, Jeremiah's warning to the king is missing, and Josiah is criticised for not consulting the prophet.

60. *Ibid*.

כי הוה ניחא נפשיה חזא ירמיהו שפוותיה דקא מרחשן אמר
שמא חס ושלום מילתא דלא מהגנא אמר אגב צעריה גחין
ושמעיה דקא מצדיק עליה דינא אנפשיה אמר צדיק הוא ה' כי
פיהו מריתי פתח עליה ההיא שעתה רוח אפינו משיח ה'.

"When he [Josiah] was dying Jeremiah observed that his lips were moving and he feared that perhaps, Heaven forbid, [Josaih] was saying something improper because of his great pain; he thereupon bent down and overheard him justifying [God's] decree against himself saying, 'The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against His word (Lam. 1:18)'. He [Jeremiah] then said of him, 'The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord (Lam. 4:20)'".

61. Lamentations R., 4:1.

תשתפכנה אבני קדש בראש כל חוצות אלו רביעיות דם שהיו
יורדות בשעה שנשתיירו בו ת"ק חצים והיה ירמיה קובר כל
אחד במקומם.

"'The holy stones are poured out at the head of every street (Lam. 4:1)', these are the fourth parts [logs] of blood that fell when there were five hundred arrows in him [Josiah] and Jeremiah buried each in its place". Cf. also II Chron. 35:25, "And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing men and singing women spoke of Josiah in their lamentations unto this day... and, behold, they are written in the lamentations".

62. Arnold J. Weider, Jeremiah in the Aggadah (unpublished Doctoral thesis, Brandeis University, 1963), p. 33.

63. Mishnah Sanhedrin, 11:5.

נביא השקר המתנבא על מה שלא שמע ומה שלא נאמר לו.

According to some of the Rabbis, Hananiah was originally a true prophet who became a false one. Cf. the view of R. Joshua ben Levi in TY Sanhedrin, 11, 7, 30b. Siphre to Deut. 13:3, pp. 149-150 and TB Sanhedrin, 90a cite a similar view in the name of R. Akiba who used Hananiah to explain Deut. 13:2-3. These verses speak of a false prophet producing signs to substantiate his words. Since God would not allow substantiation for the claims of a false prophet, the verses must refer to a prophet who was originally a true one and who had produced substantiation by signs for his prophecy and subsequently became a false prophet.

64. TB Sanhedrin, 89a.

> ...דקאי ירמיה בשוק העליון וקאמר כה אמר ה׳ [צבאות]
> הנני שובר את קשת עילם נשא חנניה קל וחמר בעצמו מה
> עילם שלא בא אלא לעזור את בבל אמר הקב"ה הנני שובר
> את קשת עילם כשדים עצמן על אחת כמה וכמה אתא איהו
> בשוק התחתון אמר כה אמר ה׳...שברתי את עול מלך בבל.

Elaborations of this story appear in TY Sanhedrin, 11, 7, 30b; Tanhuma Vayera, 13, and PR, 26, p. 130a.

65. Abrahma J. Heschel, The Prophets (Philadelphia: 1962), pp. 115-119.

66. According to Sheldon Blank, "It is the time that distinguishes the true from 'false' prophet. A 'false' prophet speaks a good word in a wrong context. Hananiah was a false prophet. What he said, which Jeremiah contested, was that Jerusalem's God would destroy the burdensome power of Babylonia in two years' time and return to the city the Temple vessels, the king, and the captives whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away (Jer. 28:2-4)--a pleasant comforting word spoken at the wrong season. When a Second Isaiah says it, it is right: 'Turn aside, turn aside, depart touch no unclean thing; Depart in a

state of purity bearing the vessels of the Lord (52:11)'. Spoken by Hananiah before the fall of Jerusalem, it was false.
...Prophets who bring a comforting word are not for that reason false. They with their comforting words are 'false' only if the times demand a disturbing, perspective-making word". Sheldon Blank, Understanding the Prophets (New York: 1969), pp. 89-90.

67. TY Sanhedrin, 11, 7, 30b.

אמר לו ירמיה אתה אומר בעוד שנתים ימים אני משיב וגו'
ואני אומר שנבוכדנצר בא ונוטל את השאר בבלה יבואו
ושמה יהיו וגו' אמר לו תן סימן לדבריך א"ל אני מתנבא
לרעה ואיני יכול ליתן סימן לדברי שהקב"ה אומר להביא
רעה ומתנחם ואתה מתנבא לטובה את הוא שאת הוא צריך
ליתן סימן לדבריך אמר לו לאו את הוא שאת צריך ליתן
סימן לדבריך.

"Jeremiah said to him: You say that 'In another two years I will bring back, etc. (28:3)', but I say that Nebuchadnezzar will come and take away those that remain here, 'They will come to Babylon and there they will be, etc. (27:22)'. He [Hananiah] said to him: Give a sign that your words are true. Jeremiah said to him: I prophesy evil and I am unable to give a sign that my words are true since the Holy One, blessed be He says that He will bring evil but changes His mind; but you prophesy good, it is you who must bring a sign that your words are true. He replied: No, it is you who must give a sign that your words are true".

68. Actually, Jeremiah does produce a sign to verify his words--Hananiah would die during that very year (28:16-17). *TY Sanhedrin*, 11, 7, 30b.

אמר לו אין כיני הרי אני נותן אות ומופת באותו האיש
השנה ההיא הוא מת כי סרה דבר על ה'.

"He [Jeremiah] said to him: If so [if I must give a sign], I will give a sign through that man himself [Hananiah]. He will die this year because he has perverted God's message (28:16)". The Biblical text records that Hananiah died in the seventh month of that year (Tishrei). Rabbinic legend states that Hananiah died on the eve of the New Year (1 Tishrei), and that he ordered his family to keep his death a secret until the next day so as to give the lie to Jeremiah's prophecy. *Ibid*. Cf. also, *PR*, 26, p. 130a.

69. *TB Sanhedrin*, 96a.

א"ל מאי היא א"ל חזקיה חלש ואיתפח אמר איכא גברא כי
האי ולא בעינא לשדורי ליה שלמא כתבו ליה שלמא למלכא
חזקיה שלם לקרתא דירושלם שלם לאלהא רבא נבוכדנצר
ספריה דבלאדן הוה ההיא שעתא לא הוה התם כי אתא אמר
להו היכי כתביתו אמרו ליה הכי כתבינן אמר להו קריתו
ליה אלהא רבא וכתביתו ליה לבסוף אמר אלא הכי כתובו
שלם לאלהא רבא שלם לקרתא דירושלם שלם למלכא חזקיה

אמרי ליה קריינא דאיגרתא איהו ליהוי פרוונקא רהט
בתריה כדרהיט ארבע פסיעות אתא גבריאל ואוקמיה.

70. According to R. Johanan, had not Gabriel stopped Nebuchadnezzar, the merit that he would have acquired through this demonstration of honor to God would have been so great that he would have been enabled to utterly destroy Israel. Ibid.

71. M. Aberbach has suggested to me orally that this Midrash is one of many that portray Jeremiah as representative of the peace party in Jerusalem at the time of the revolt against Rome in 66 CE. In these Midrashim, Nebuchadnezzar represents Titus and Jeremiah represents R. Johanan ben Zakkai, the leading spokesman for the peace party.

72. PR, 26, p. 130a.
כיון ששמע אותו ירמיה אמר לו אמן כן יתקיימו דבריך
ויתבטלו שלי אני משתכר ואתה מפסיד אני כהן אוכל מבית
המקדש ואתה גבעוני חוטב עצים ושואב מים למזבח.

73. TB Shebuoth, 36a.

אמר רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא אמן בו שבועה בו קבלת דברים
בו האמנת דברים...בו האמנת דברים דכתיב ויאמר ירמיה
[הנביא] אמן כן יעשה ה׳ יקם ה׳ את דבריך.

"R. Jose bar R. Hanina said: 'Amen' implies oath, acceptance of words, and confirmation of words... confirmation as it is written, 'And the prophet Jeremiah said, amen, may the Lord do so, may the Lord fulfill your words (Jer. 28:6)'".

74. Siphre to Deut. 32:20, p. 367.

רבי דוסתי בן יהודה אומר אל תהי קורא לא אמון בם אלא
אמן בם שלא היו רוצים לענות אמן אחר הנביאים בשעה
שהיו מברכים אותם וכן הוא אומר למען הקים את השבועה
אשר נשבע לאבותיכם לתת להם ארץ זבת חלב ודבש כיום
הזה ולא היה בהם אחד שפתח פיו וענה אמן עד שבא ירמיה
וענה אמן שנאמר ואען ואומר אמן ה'...

75. TB Sotah, 41b-42a.

ואמר ר' אלעזר כל המחניף לחבירו סוף נופל בידו ואם
אינו נופל בידו נופל ביד בניו ואם אינו נופל ביד
בניו נופל ביד בן בנו שנאמר ויאמר ירמיה לחנניה אמן
...וכתיב ויהי הוא בשער בנימין ושם בעל פקידות
ושמו יראיה בן שלמיה בן חנניה ויתפש את ירמיה...

"R. Elazar said: Whoever flatters his [wicked] fellow will in the end fall into his hands, and if not into his hands into the hands of his children, and if not into his children's hands, then into those of his grandchildren as it says, 'And Jeremiah said to Hananiah, amen...', and it is written, 'And he was in the gate of Benjamin and there was an officer there, Irijah the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, and he seized Jeremiah...(37:13)'".

76. PR, 26, p. 131a.

כאותה השעה אמר המקום לירמיהו קום לך לענתות וקח השדה
...אותה שעה חשב ירמיהו בלבו שמא נותן המקום ונושאים
ונותנים בתוכה שאומר לי המקום לך קנה לך את השדה כיון
שיצא ירמיהו מירושלים ירד המלאך מן השמים ונתן רגליו
על חומות ירושלים ופרצן קרא ואמר יבואו השונאים...

"In that time the Lord said to Jeremiah: Rise, go to Anathoth and buy the field...At that time Jeremiah thought perhaps God is sparing the city [through negotiations] since He told me to go and buy the field. As soon as Jeremiah left Jerusalem the angel descended from heaven, set his feet against the walls of Jerusalem and breached them. He cried out saying: Let the enemy come and enter...". Note the concept that the righteous protects his city and generation. Cf. e.g. Rashi on Num. 14:9 where Job is depicted as the protector of the Canaanites.

77. Ibid., p. 131b.

הלך לו לדרכו התחיל צווח ואומר כאיזו דרך הלכו להם
חטאים כאיזו דרך הלכו האבודים אלא אני אלך ואובד
[עמהם] היה [הולך] ורואה את השביל מלא דם והארץ
מרובצת כדם הרוגיה מכאן ומכאן קבע פניו לארץ וראה
פרסות רגלים יונקים ועוללים שהיה מהלכים כשבי היה
גוחן לארץ ומנשקן כשהגיע לגלות גיפפן ונשקן.

Cf. also Lamentations R., proem 34 end.

78. Ibid.

...אחי ועמי כל כך אירע לכם [על] שלא הייתם שומעים לדברי נבואתי.

79. Ibid.

אני מעיד שמים וארץ אלו בכיתם בכייה אחת עד שאתם בציון לא גליתם...

80. Lamentations R., proem 24.

אמר להן הקב"ה למלאכי השרת בואו ונלך אני ואתם ונראה בביתי מה עשו אויבים בו מיד הלך הקב"ה ומלאכי השרת וירמיה לפניו וכיון שראה הקב"ה את בית המקדש אמר בוודאי זהו ביתי וזהו מנוחתי שבאו אויבים ועשו בה כרצונם באותה שעה היה הקב"ה בוכה ואומר אוי לי על ביתי בני היכן אתם כהני היכן אתם אוהבי היכן אתם מה אעשה לכם התריתי בכם ולא חזרתם בתשובה אמר הקב"ה לירמיה אני דומה היום לאדם שהיה לו בן יחידי ועשה לו חופה ומת בתוך חופתו ואין לך כאב לא עלי ולא על בני לך וקרא לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב ומשה מקבריהם שהם יודעים לבכות...

Cf. also, above pp. 111-112, n. 78.

81. Ibid.

באותה שעה קפצה רחל אמנו לפני הקב"ה...ומה אני שאני בשר ודם עפר ואפר לא קנאתי לצרה שלי ולא הוצאתיה לבושה ולחרפה ואתה מלך חי וקיים רחמן מפני מה קנאת לעבודה זרה שאין בה ממש והגלית בני...מיד נתגללו רחמיו של הקב"ה ואמר בשבילך רחל אני מחזיר את ישראל למקומן...

"At that moment, Mother Rachel spoke up before the Holy One, blessed be He: If I who am flesh and blood,

UMI

dust and ashes, was not jealous of my rival [Leah], and I did not cause her to be shamed, You who are the Eternal Merciful King, why should you have been jealous of idolatry which has no substance, and [because of it] exiled my children...Immediately God's mercies were aroused and He said: For your sake, Rachel, I will return Israel to their home...".

82. Ibid.

> ...מיד הלך ירמיה למערת המכפלה ואמר לאבות העולם
> עמדו שהגיע זמן שאתם מתבקשים לפני הקב"ה אמרו לו
> למה אמר להם איני יודע מפני שהיה מתירא שלא יאמרו
> בימיך היתה לבנינו זאת...

83. Ibid., proem 34.

> אמר נבוזראדן לירמיה חזי חד מן תלת מילין אית בך או
> נביא שקר את או מבעט ביסורין את או שופך דמים את או
> נביא שקר את שכל הדין שנייא את מתנבא על הדא קרתא
> דהיא חרבה וכדו דחרבה נפשך בישא עלך סגיא או מבעט
> ביסורין את דאנא לית אנא בעי למיעבד בישא ואת בעי
> למעבד לך בישא למימר לית יסוריא חשיבין עלי מידי
> או שופך דמים את דמלכא פקיד לי עליך סבי בדיל דלא
> למעבד לך בישא ואת בעי למעבד בישא בגין דישמע מלכא
> ויקטלוניה לההוא גברא.

Cf. also, PK, 13:9.

84. Ibid.

> ...אין את יתיב הכא אנא אזיל עמהון ואין את אזיל
> עמהון אנא יתיב הכא אמר לפניו רבש"ע אין אנא אזיל

עמהון מה אנא יכיל מהני להון אלא ייזול מלכהון
ברייהון עמהון דהוא יכול מהני להון סגיא...

"...if you remain here I will go with them, and if you go with them I will remain here. He said to Him: Master of the Universe, if I go with them what good can I do for them? Let their King, their Creator go with them, for He can do them much good". The bold idea that God actually went into exile with the Jews is stated explicitly in Rabbinic literature. It is implied, at least in part, in Exek. 11:23. The Siphre contains the following statement of R. Akiba: "...you find that in every place they were exiled the Divine Presence was with them also...they were exiled to Babylonia, the Divine Presence was with them as it says, 'For your sake I was sent to Babylonia (Isa. 43:14)'; they were exiled to Elam, the Divine Presence was with them as it says, 'And I placed My throne in Elam (Jer. 49:38)'; they were exiled to Edom, the Divine Presence was with them as it says, 'Who is this coming from Edom...(Isa. 63:1)', and when they will return [from exile], the Divine Presence will return with them as it says, 'And God will return your captivity...(Deut. 30:3)'. Siphre Behaalotecha to Num. 10:35, p. 22b. Cf. also, Henry Slonimsky, "The Philosophy Implicit in the Midrash", Hebrew Union College Annual XXVII (1956), pp. 262-263, and A. Marmorstein, The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God,

UMI

pp. 71-76.

85. PK, 13:9 end.

...ובחזירה היה רואה אצבעות ידים ורגלים מקוטעות
ומושלכות לדרכים והיה נוטלם ומחבקן ומנשקן ונותנן
לתוך טליתו...

86. PR, 26, pp. 131b-132a.

כשהייתי עולה לירושלים נטלתי עיני וראיתי אשה אחת יושבת
בראש ההר לבושיה שחורים ושערה סתור צועקת מבקשת מי
ינחמנה ואני צועק ומבקש מי ינחמני קרבתי אצלה ודברתי
עמה...ענתה ואמרה לי אינך מכירני אני היא שהיו לי
שבעה בנים יצא אביהם למדינת הים עד שאני עולה ובוכה
עליו הרי שניבא ואמר לי נפל הבית על שבעה בנייך
והרגם איני יודע על מי אבכה ועל מי אסתור שעריי
עניתי ואמרתי אין אתה טובה מן [אמי] ציון והיא
עשויה מרעית לחיות השדה ענתה ואמרה לי אני אמך ציון
אני היא אם השבעה...אמר לה ירמיה דומה מכתך [למכתו]
של איוב מאיוב נטלתי בניו ובנותיו וממך נטלו בנייך
ובנותייך...וכשם שחזרתי ונחמתי את איוב כך אני עתיד
לחזור ולנחמך...בשר ודם בנה אותך בשר ודם החריבך
אבל לעתיד לבא אני בונה אותך שכן כתוב בונה ירושלים
ה' נדחי ישראל יכנס...

The legend apparently is based on Jer. 31:14-16: "Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamentation and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children. Thus says the Lord: Refrain your voice from weeping And your eyes from tears; For there is a reward for your work says the Lord And they will come back from the land of the enemy And there is hope for your future says the Lord And your children will return to their own border".

87. On the prophet's role as an intercessor for the people, see S. Blank, Jeremiah: Man and Prophet, pp. 80-91, and "Prophets and Prophecy", Encyclopedia Judaica, XIII, pp. 1169-1171.

88. Midrash Psalms, 90:2.

ארבעה הם שסידרו תפלה וקינטרו דברים לפני הקב"ה ירמיה
שנאמר ואתפלל אל ה׳ אחרי תתי את ספר המקנה (Jer. 32:16)
על ידי שקינטר בדברים מה כתיב למטה הנה הסוללות באו
העיר ללכדה.

89. PR, 31, p. 144a.

...למלך שהיה לו מטרונת והיתה חביבה עליו ביותר ועל
ידי שמטרונת היתה יודעת שהמלך היה מחבבה יותר מדיי
היתה פושעת על כבודו של מלך את גזירותיו פעם אחת
כעס עליה המלך וגזר על עבדיו שיבואו ויגררו אותה
בשערה שושבינה שהיה שם עומד כיון שראה כן מיד בא
אצל המלך התחיל אומר לו מרי המלך אמור לי מה יש
בדעתך לשוב עליה או אין בדעתך לשוב עליה אם יש
בדעתך לשוב [עליה] שליט הוא אדם באשתו ואם אין
בדעתך לשוב עליה היה לך לגרשה שתלך ותנשא לאחר
כך אמר ירמיה לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע המאוס מאסת את
יהודה אם בציון געלה נפשך [אלא] אם יש בדעתך לשוב
עליה מדוע הכיתנו ואין לנו מרפא א"ל לך לרבך
ולרבו דרבך משה רבם של כל הנביאים כך אמרתי [לו]
בסוף כל התוכחות ואף גם זאת לא מאסתים ולא
געלתים...

For the concept the Destruction had sundered the special relationship between God and Israel is a claim made by the people, cf. above, pp. 222-223, n. 55.

90. Midrash Psalms, 19:2.

> ירמיה אמר האל הגדול הגבור ולא אמר והנורא ולמה אמר הגבור אמר לזה נאה לקרותו הגבור שראה שבניו מסורין בקולרין וביתו חרבה ושותק ולא אמר והנורא על בית המקדש שנחרב שנאמר נורא אלהים ממקדשך היכן הוא מורא שנכנסו שונאים בביתו ולא נתייראו.

This concept is widespread in the Bible: cf. Ps. 115:2, "Why should the nations say: Where is their God"; Josh. 7:9, "And what will You do for Your great name"; Deut. 9:28, "Else the country from which You freed them will say: It was because the Lord was powerless to bring them into the Land He had promised them, and because He hated them, that He brought them out to have them die in the wilderness".
R. Phinehas' statement is followed by that of R. Jacob bar R. Eleazar who interpreted Jeremiah's prayer not as a rebuke to God, but as praise of Him. Jeremiah's prayer was not as full as that of Moses because the prophet knew that God was truth-loving and did not want excessive flattery. Ibid.

91. Deuteronomy R., 2:6.

> ...לכן מלך שיצא לתרבות רעה והיו לו שלשה פרגוגין

הראשון אמר יעשה לו כבלים של מאה ליטרין והשני אמר
...יעשה לו כבלים של י"ב ליטרין בא השלישי ואמר...
יעשה לו כבלים של ליטרא אחת כך אמר משה יעשו לו
כבלים של מאה ליטרין שנא' ומצאוהו רעות רבות וצרות
(Deut. 31:17) דוד אמר יעשו לו כבלים של י"ב
ליטרין שנא' יענך ה' ביום צרה (Ps. 20:2) כשם שהיו
י"ב שעות כיון שעמד ירמיה אמר...יעשה להם כבלים של
ליטרא אחת שנא' ועת צרה היא ליעקב וממנה יושע (Jer. 30:7)

92. II Maccabees 2:1. This contradicts 1:19 which says that the priests hid the fire.

93. _Ibid._, 2:4-5. I Kings 8:4 and II Chron. 5:5 state that Solomon brought the tabernacle to Jerusalem. However, no other mention of it is made during the period of the First Temple.
A. Kahanna believes that this legend is based on Jer. 52:17-23 where the ark is not mentioned among the Temple vessels destroyed by the Babylonians. _Ha-Sepharim ha-Hizonim_, ed. Abraham Kahanna (Tel-Aviv: 1960), II, p. 181.
Variations of this story appear in other Jewish sources. According to _Paraleipomena of Jeremiah_ 3:9-11, God commanded Jeremiah to hide the Temple vessels in the earth. _Tosephta Sotah_, 13:1 and _TB Yoma_, 52b state that Josiah hid the ark so that it would not fall into the hands of the Babylonians. Note how this contradicts what Jeremiah predicted

about the Ark (ch. 28). In these sources, the ark is mentioned as one of the five things that Josiah hid. The other four were: the container of manna; the container of sprinkling water; Aaron's staff with its almonds and blossoms; the chest sent by the Philistines as a gift to God. Cf. parallel sources cited by O. Komlos, "Jewish Elements in the Vitae Prophetarum", p. 131. However, Tosephta Sotah, 13:1 also mentions Rabbi Eleazar's opinion that the ark was taken to Babylonia. Cf. also, Michael Guttman, Mafteah ha-Talmud (Budapest: 1917), IIIb, p. 91.

94. R.H. Charles Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. I, p. 133.

CONCLUSIONS

The Rabbinic portrayal of the major Biblical prophetic figures was deeply colored by the historical fate of the Jewish people during the early centuries of the first Christian millennium. These were harsh times for Israel, marked by political defeat, and an increasingly bitter estrangement from her daughter religion, Christianity. The Rabbis understood the history of their times from the perspective of Biblical teaching. Central to that outlook was an assertion of God's justice and an acceptance of it. It was axiomatic that righteousness would be rewarded and that evil would be punished. Israel's sufferings were, therefore, deserved. They were the result of her sins. The prophetic denunciations of Israel's backsliding and warnings of punishment assumed an increased vividness and a new dimension of realism for the Rabbis. However, Rabbinic concern with the prophets did not focus on the prophetic chastisements, although these helped to explain the disasters of history. The sore-tried soul of Israel required the soothing balm of comfort and encouragement, not the upsetting words of chastisement. Israel was under attack, and her adversaries were using the prophetic denunciations of her to prove that she was no longer graced with God's favor. In the face of these circumstances, much of the Rabbinic treatment of the major prophets should be under-

UMI

stood as a form of consolation literature aimed at boosting sagging morale.

In addition to the consolatory aspect of prophetic activity stressed by the Rabbis we also find a marked denigration of the phenomenon of prophecy in Rabbinic sources. Prophecy, as far as the Rabbis were concerned, was decidedly a thing of the past. While certain characteristics of it remained in Rabbinic times, these were fragmentary remnants of a phenomenon no longer extant. In this limitation of prophecy, the Rabbis demonstrated a distinct reserve concerning pneumatic religious phenomena. The "spirit" no longer roamed freely, descending on those specially designated by God. Rather, God's will was now determined by assiduous application of one's intellectual and physical faculties to the study of God's will as He had revealed it in His Torah. Rabbinic denigration of prophecy may, therefore, be seen as an attempt on the part of the Rabbis to secure their own leadership. This may be seen especially clearly in the limitations that the Rabbis placed on prophetic activity in the realm of halachah, a realm that the Rabbis claimed as their own exclusive preserve.

Rabbinic denigration of prophecy served an additional purpose to securing the leadership of the Rabbis. It also countered the Christian claim of prophecy for Jesus and the continuation of prophecy into early Christian times.

UMI

The consolatory feature of prophecy which the Rabbis stressed is the most outstanding ingredient in their portrayal of the major prophets and Elijah. The latter, whom Rabbinic lore associated with the onset of the Messianic age, became a symbol of redemption in the folk imagination. His connection with the resurrection of the dead and his own immortality strengthened and deepened this symbol. His converse with men was a constant reminder that God had neither forgotten nor forsaken His people.

It is, however, Isaiah who is the Prophet of Comfort. This, no doubt, is due to the consolatory nature of the prophecies contained in the latter part of the Biblical book of Isaiah. Although born of royal blood, Isaiah's heart was open to the pain of the whole house of Israel. It was his prophecies that the Rabbis used to counterbalance the prophecies of doom of his harsher prophetic colleagues. Yet, it is this comforter of Israel who is criticized by the Rabbis for his criticism of Israel. The Rabbis dwell on his characterization of Israel as a "people of unclean lips". Unsolicited criticism of Israel went beyond the bounds of legitimate prophetic activity, and was, in turn, the object of Rabbinic reproach. Indeed, in the case of Isaiah, it was this criticism of Israel that, according to some Rabbinic sources, was the cause of the prophet's martyrdom.

The theme of marytrology is more positively, if less directly, presented in Rabbinic comments on Ezekiel. Ezekiel's resurrection of the dry bones contains an obvious message of comfort for Israel. However, the Rabbis connected this episode with the would-be-martyrs Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, thus forming a link between Israel's willingness for martyrdom and the future redemption. Such a linkage could only serve to encourage and comfort future generations of persecuted Jews.

Rabbinic comments on Ezekiel also reveal a decided tendency to denigrate esoteric speculation. The negative tone of many statements about Ezekiel's merkabah vision reflect a deep-seated distrust of esoteric mysticism on the part of many Rabbis.

Jeremiah, for some sources the last, and surely the most tragic of the prophets, was the focus of considerable Rabbinic comment. It is in their portrayal of Jeremiah that the Rabbis manifest the core of their understanding of the prophet and his task. Jeremiah was the prophet of the Destruction, and thus lived to witness the realization of the most dire of his prophetic warnings. While much in Rabbinic lore portrays Jeremiah as a comforter of Israel, his most striking characteristic is the agony that his mission caused him. Jeremiah was the prophet, who more than any other prophet, was trapped in his mission of preaching destruction while his love for the people and

UMI

sense of identity with them made his task a burden of almost unbearable dimensions. It is here that we find the key to the Rabbinic understanding of prophecy. The prophet loves his people and takes no joy in his mission of chastisement and forewarning. Even less does he find joy or satisfaction in seeing his dire words fulfilled. His task is to reconcile Israel with its Father in heaven. If Israel proves recalcitrant, it will be punished. However, even if the prophet fails to reconcile Israel with its God and the people are punished, the Rabbis emphasize the prophetic promise of restoration. The separation between God and Israel is temporary. Eventually, in God's own time, with the people's repentance (and, according to some sources, even without it), Israel and God will be reconciled, and Israel vindicated.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used:

TB--*Talmud Babbi* (Babylonian Talmud)

TY--*Talmud Yerushalmi* (Palestinian Talmud)

PR--*Pesikta Rabbati*

PK--*Pesikta De Rab Kahanna*

PRE--*Pirke De Rabbi Eliezer*

ARN(A)--*Abot De Rabbi Nathan (The Sayings According to Rabbi Nathan, version A)*.

ARN(B)--*Abot De Rabbi Nathan (The Sayings According to Rabbi Nathan, version B)*.

Genesis R.--*Genesis Rabba*

Exodus R.--*Exodus Rabba*

Leviticus R.--*Leviticus Rabba*

Numbers R.--*Numbers Rabba*

Deuteronomy R.--*Deuteronomy Rabba*

Canticles R.--*Canticles Rabba*

Ecclesiastes R.--*Ecclesiastes Rabba*

Esther R.--*Esther Rabba*

Ruth R.--*Ruth Rabba*

Lamentations R.--*Lamentations Rabba*

Mekilta--*Mekilta De Rabbi Ishmael*

UMI

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UMI

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